# MINISTRY IN THE MARKETPLACE
# IN A NON-PARISH SETTING

By

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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Cafe Word is a grass roots ministry that was birthed out of the formation of a weekly Bible Study at various cafes in the community of the Village of South Orange, New Jersey. At that time, I focused my ministry to serve the un-churched, youth and young adults, specifically the Hip Hop culture. Despite community concerns, Cafe Word was established in a bookstore, which was purposed to bridge the gap between the sacred and secular Millennial communities in this non-parish setting. Walter Lizando Hidalgo-Olivares, in his book, *Beyond the Four Walls, the Rising Ministry and Spirituality of Hip Hop*, explores how Hip Hop extends beyond the scope of music. The Spirit of the Lord revealed to me that the influence of Hip Hop, and now Millennials as well as Generation Z (Zoomers), opens new spiritual views of transformation, liberation and empowerment in Generations X, Y and Z that allow for development of key platforms that will enable the church to better connect with them.

Music and the Word of God are at the very core of my ministry. This study explores the development of the tools and service design necessary to better reach the non-traditional twenty-first century Millennial and their cultural milieu. The researcher is directly involved in this work and research as a participant observer. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, THE WORD with scriptures—a text-message ministry—were texted to Millennials to create a non-parish setting of individual ministry that aided in

offering hope and a sense of peace amidst the various lockdowns. Three research questions are explored that inquire more deeply into 1) the Millennial Generation, by way of their economic and social-structural impacts and their generational predecessors, 2) issues of morality and Hip Hop culture, and 3) practical theology for ministering to Millennials. Further qualitative research is done to investigate the perspectives and feelings of study participants about their beliefs about morality and not attending a traditional church setting. Survey responses are analyzed to help establish a more impactful Christian ministry that connects a retail business ("the marketplace") and main street community and Millennial and Hip Hop cultures.

To my children and grandchildren, the loves of my life

who represent the four generations

with whom my soul is tied and the reason for which this research exists:

Duke (GenX, Hip Hop), Brad (GenY, Millennial)

Young Duke (GenZ, Zoomer)

Princess Zoe (GenAlpha)

It is my prayer that they pick up the Mic and courageously speak as the

Leaders I have always encouraged them to be.

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

Cafe Word is a grass roots ministry that was birthed out of the formation of a weekly Bible Study at various cafes in the open community of the Village of South Orange, New Jersey. Local business owners were not in favor of several of us holding Bible Studies at their venues, and they disapproved of our request to assemble five times. Thankfully, Stoneys Restaurant was always willing to take us in. Still, we didn't have a place of our own.

On my daily running exercises, I would pass by the doors of a vacant storefront that used to be a lovely candle shop. I had been a customer there for almost twenty years. For a short time, it became a clothing store before it sat empty. I used to look in the windows and dream of putting a baby grand piano in there. I thought our group could potentially meet in this space, too.

One Monday morning in August 2015, I inquired with the landlord who told me that he had a potential client who was interested in renting it and who had kept promising to secure it but still had not done so. The landlord told me he would wait until Friday, and if the person didn't show, then the storefront was mine. God intervened and by Friday, August 17, 2015, I held a lease in-hand. Several weeks later, I opened the doors to Cafe

Word Bookstore at the west end of South Orange, New Jersey.[1] This location began as a bookstore that also functioned as a ministry wherein we continued our study of the Word of God.

The roots of Cafe Word run long and deep in the Village from the labor of my ancestor, Willie Eva (Annie) Howard, who lived to the golden age of 102. Annie worked forty years in South Orange for the family of Robert Stern, who was the then-President of the New York Stock Exchange. She served as a classy maid, cooked amazing food, and helped to raise their son. The bookstore sits parallel to the Villages' duck pond, and as a young child she would periodically take me to work with her. The highlight of the day was at lunch time when we would go to the pond to feed the ducks. Annie's warm, spirited personality and passion for people left a permanent footprint of love in the community. She lived to participate in the ceremonial Blessing of the grand opening of Cafe Word and attended many of the events when her health permitted.

It is worth noting that my vision for this type of worship venue was conceived while I studied for my Masters of Divinity degree at Drew Theological Seminary from 2003-2007. At that time, I focused my ministry on serving the un-churched, youth and young adults, specifically the Hip Hop culture. To that end, the Bookstore is purposed to bridge the gap between the sacred and secular Millennial communities in this non-parish setting as we convene meetings and events in the building as well as in the community.

As I completed my four years of study at Drew University, professor, youth minister, artist, and author Walter Lizard Hidalgo-Olivares published an extraordinary book that directly inspired my work. In *Beyond the Four Walls: the Rising Ministry and*

[1] See Appendix B — The Setting: Cafe Word

*Spirituality of Hip Hop*, Hidalgo-Olivares explores how Hip Hop extends beyond the scope of music, commercialization, and "hood" life. Hildago-Olivares states, "I would be lying to myself if I were to say that God's spirit is limited to the four walls of the church and, therefore is unable to reach out to the broader secular places of our world."[2] Further, Hildago-Olivares examines the unprecedented impact that Hip Hop continues to have in both our secular and spiritual communities.

At Drew, my assignment in my mission field was to implement the principles of the Missio Dei, Mission of God or sending of God. This missional movement aims to meet people where they are in the Market Place and navigate with them to a defining moment in their understanding of God. During this assignment, I examined the character of Jesus and how living in the spirit of Hip Hop aligns with my knowledge of Jesus. At the same time, I relied heavily upon my embodied knowledge of this subject as I navigated parenting two sons who were born nineteen years apart. My sons, Duke, born in 1970 at the beginning of the Hip Hop movement, and Brad, in 1988 at the onset of the Millennial era, are exemplary children of their own generations and they provided me with insight into my ministry and defined how my soul is inextricably tied to it.

A more focused historical depiction of this ministry connects to the first Hip Hop worship service I designed to satisfy a requirement for my Church and Worship course at Drew. I held this event in my home. During that same semester, I enrolled in a course entitled, "Spirit and Struggle," led by visiting Professor Rev. Dr. Vincent Harding, a minister, historian, and former speechwriter for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During that service, Rev. Dr. Harding and two other elders, Rev. John Wingate of the A.M.E.

[2] Walter Lizando Hidalgo-Olivares, *Beyond the Four Walls: The Rising Ministry and Spirituality of Hip Hop,* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011), 2.

church and Rev. Ted Faison of an independent charismatic church, attended and formally charged the initial structure of Cafe Word's service, and ultimately, my ministry. And, as an aside, but not without significance, I can step back even further into the history of this ministry to chronicle Dr. King's visit, in 1968, to my high school just prior to his assassination in Memphis TN. As he was passing down the aisle, I reached out and, literally, was able to touch the hem of his garment! This Hip Hop Christian ministry is inspired in part by Hidalgo-Olivare's words:

> Because of its ongoing commitment to community organizing, activism, social justice and education, Hip Hop is worthy to be called a 21st century socio-political, theological and Spiritual Movement akin to that of Dr. King, Ghandi, Mohammad, Abraham, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and most notably in this book, Jesus Christ and Paul the Apostle.[3]

Subsequent to the service in my home, I interviewed Dr. Harding to solicit his evaluation of my program. His comments are as follows:

> What was striking was the cross-generational congregation and the sense of freedom to worship together. I needed to be there, and so did the other elders. I think that this type of ministry can be used to liberate the Hip Hop generation, but more profoundly, what would be the pathway from your living room to some prisons because such a major portion of our youth is in prison. Then there has to be a pathway from where we gather to there or we will be missing our calling.[4]

The Lord then graced my spirit and began to frame the depth of my theology on an even deeper level with a passage of scripture from Isaiah 61:1-2: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of the

[3] Ibid., 53.
[4] Vincent Harding, interview by author, South Orange, New Jersey, May 2005.

prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."[5] The Spirit of the Lord revealed to me that the influence of the Hip Hop generation, and now Millennials as well as Generation Z (Zoomers), opens new views of transformation, liberation, and empowerment that allow for the development of new spiritual and social interactions that will enable the church to better connect with them.

As my ministerial call crystallized, my research at Drew introduced me to some of the mixed methods of qualitative research, like "involved participant observer." I am particularly taken by Tim Sensing's argument that "within the human systems and relational constructs of research, I propose that DMin projects are a type of participatory action research that introduces an intervention in order to provide ministerial leadership for the transformation of the organization."[6] Much of the research that follows in this dissertation project consists of observation at my local setting, survey gathering and analysis of key "interventions"—new ministerial outreach efforts, like THE WORD ministry that came out of the pandemic, and theological and critical arguments about the nature of God's work in the culture around us. Because I am located in the midst of this work, which is also my research, I am quite clearly a "participant observer," which Sensing explains as "the primary tool used in ethnography, the study of living human beings in their social and cultural contexts."[7] As a result, I am an active, participant observer who is committed to the future work of Cafe Word and have become, even more so through the course of this study, a member of the specific community of study, as an

[5] (Isaiah 61:1-2 KJV)

[6] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 58.

[7] Ibid.

active agent, while studying the experience of that process. What follows in the rest of this dissertation project is a documentation and analysis of that long engagement.

The McAlvany Intelligence Report proposes, "The need for a 'change agent' that serves communities as an impartial catalyst for development of 21st century, new paradigm ministry models."[8] The initial research proposal for this project was drafted in the Pirates Cove, a Seton Hall University café, a major gathering place of millennial students. There, I observed as they dialogued in study, how social media sites and apps were their fundamental social platforms of use. It was my goal to better study this generational shift and to imagine what a non-parish Christian ministry might look like for young people, such as these students.

Millennials are both the offspring and siblings of the Hip Hop (Gen. X) culture whose social conscious music genre captured the attention of society. Couched in the beat and lyrics of Hip Hop was a stunning critique of the disparity of wealth and the dysfunction of religion that was in desperate need of a change. I wanted to harness this spiritual music and social critique to better engage Millennials amidst the hard realities of life and with the deep questions that matter.

At Cafe Word, the core "congregational" structure stems from a Christian denominational tradition. The attendees are usually moderately familiar with the traditional sermons that I give even though the gospel message I preach is not limited to any one denomination or tradition. It is simply the "raw gospel" propelled by the Love of Jesus. Moreover, it transforms the lives of those who are willing to receive the message

[8] Vision for 21st Century Ministry Design, "A Snapshot of the U.S. Church," McAlvany Intelligence Report, November 1998, accessed September 28, 2019, http://www.powerlife.org/Consulting/Vision.html.

as presented. At the services, Millennials resonate with the transparency of their interactions, the relevancy of the sermons, and the freedom to dialogue in complete honesty. The congregation is diverse, and usually includes intergenerational gatherings on any given week. This collective group must not be categorized from a traditional lens, primarily because the setting is a secular and non-traditional, non-parish bookstore. As such, the attendees are often also customers, many of whom are Millennials who enter the bookstore on a regular basis. However, the core congregation has participated in this ministry since its inception and understands the importance of a personal relationship with God as well as how to minister to others based on their own experiences. And, as disciples, they have been trained and socialized in the principles of the Missio Dei, the missional movement, which advocates meeting people where they are in their place of understanding God. The interactions of these congregational disciples in the wider community and marketplace becomes a "Verbal Network" where people talk to each other and trust that the content of their conversations comes directly from God.

Within the vicinity of Cafe Word Bookstore, at least ten Houses of Worship meet regularly to offer traditional Christian services. The initial plan of research was to inquire into the attendance and membership rates of Millennials at these congregations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, I needed to shift this mode of inquiry since each of these churches were trying to move online and reimagine their ministry and services. Instead, I endeavored to "fill the gap," watching out for Millennials in the community and seeking to continue building a non-parish ministry that could meet the urgent spiritual and emotional needs of people isolated in their homes in the midst of a global pandemic. I did this, primarily, by THE WORD text messaging ministry, which will be discussed at

length later in this dissertation. It is noteworthy here to mention that I consider myself spiritually covered by the traditional church, however, free to operate autonomously as the Spirit leads me. This is not to say that I characterize myself as a lone ranger; I hold myself accountable for my actions. And it goes without saying that I seek advice and counsel wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

Music and the Word of God are at the very core of my ministry. Music is the Love language that adds melody to the Word and becomes a symphony of worship for God to inhabit.[9] It is through music media that messages of social awareness and change have appealed to the human consciousness, whether it be sacred or secular. The history of music and its relationship to the soul demonstrate the impact and significance, and most importantly, how it functions to bridge generational gaps. Hip Hop is a cultural phenomenon layered above a musical platform. Hidalgo-Olivares asserts that there are many methods of worship, choices of spirituality, and ways of developing a relationship with God.[10] Ultimately, all music has a worship component, and the foundation and design of every event that is held at Cafe Word has a component of music intended to orchestrate the atmosphere for Worship. It is through worship that we enter into the presence of God, seeking a vibe that captivates the spirit of all newcomers. My current mission field in the Village of South Orange has been dubbed The Live Music Capital of North Jersey. It is our goal, as a community, to continue to solidify an urban atmosphere by continuing to introduce and promote live music in all the venues in the Village.

Coming full circle in my ministry has led to the development of my vision that reflects the model of Urban Ministry in the 21st century. In this demonstration project, I

[9] (Psalms 22:3 KJV)
[10] Hidalgo-Olivares, *Beyond the Four* Walls: 107.

have developed various assessments and extended plan for my quasi-ministerial program. I have developed tools to research, theorize, design, and evaluate a model of a non-traditional church for the 21st century.

As I concluded writing the first draft of this Introduction in the spring of 2020, the world was deluged with one challenge after the other almost on a daily basis: an international pandemic, followed by an enormous societal upheaval regarding racial and social injustices, especially regarding the brutal murders of Black citizens, specifically Black males by White police officers. Just as this country prepared to reopen after a mandated shut down, a massive worldwide protest movement accompanied by riots and civil unrest began. The overwhelming majority of the protestors are Millennials, my target population.

The results of these two realities have challenged and compelled immediate systemic change, and added a greater drive in my own ministry. This is why we cannot wait any longer; we must join the younger generations of this protest movement and support them as they carve their own images and make their own footprints in the world. They have the Divine wisdom and have laid claim to their own voices to disrupt the staus quo norm and create a path of their own design. And, as Dr. William Barber, in his address to a Jewish Reform conference, stated: "in every situation, in every moment of history, many had to stand up, fight for a moral breakthrough and demand that America mend her flaws. Not because they were not patriotic, but because they were. They had to work to break through injustices to point a better way."[11] We are all charged to confront

[11] William Barber II, "We Need a Moral Breakthrough": Remarks to the URJ Biennial, December 6, 2017. https://urj.org/blog/2017/12/06/we-need-moral-breakthrough-rev-dr-william-j-barber-iis-remarks-urj-biennial-2017 (accessed June 26, 2020).

the moral challenge of these circumstances, and this ministerial project endeavors to meet this moment.

# CHAPTER 2
# PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

At the proposal stage of this project, I crafted my challenge statement, which goes as follows:

> Cafe Word Ministries, located at Cafe Word Bookstore in the Village of South Orange, New Jersey is where I serve as pastor. According to a Pew Research Study, one third of Millennials consider themselves to be unaffiliated with religion. This demonstration project will produce an assessment of a quasi-ministerial plan that will evaluate Cafe Word Ministries' presence during the past four years in the Village of South Orange; and develop a means to impact those who convene at the physical meeting place of this ministry in a novel way.

Throughout this work and my ministry, I aim to train Millennials and the next Generation Z to develop the tools and design a worship and music culture that can better serve non-traditional youth of the twenty-first century. This effort is primarily conducted on an individual-to-individual basis, using peer mentoring as a tool to create the greater vision. Martin E. Marty, in his analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison, affirms that "when peers meet and talk with each other, or when a generous mentor and an assertive student engage each other, something goes on that has the chance of altering worldviews."[12] In this demonstration project, with the input of my Millennial mentees, I aim to develop an assessment of a quasi-ministerial plan that will research,

[12] Martin E Marty, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 27.

evaluate, and shape a potential model and blueprint of a non-traditional church in this post-modern era.

As the writer of Habakkuk prophesizes: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."[13] This "vision," as it appears in scripture, is a revelation from God passed on to the human mind, informing of some future event."[14] And the Vision, as I see it, is that God does not intend to leave anyone behind. The problem, however, is that much of the traditional church in America is stuck in the past and is highly critical of youth culture and music movements, especially Hip Hop. This attitude of dismissal denies the church an opportunity to stand up with the young people of today and expose the societal inequities and challenges that exist in our country and that are having a deleterious effect on God's people—all God's people.

This issue has become personal, not only because I have children and grandchildren in the target group, but more importantly because of my love for all of God's people. In dialogue with a site team member, we discussed how churches often create programs targeted for Millennials, yet do not usually include them in the decision-making process. For this reason and others, many Millennials do not identify with the church as a reflection of themselves and their values. Millennials, indeed, have a voice

[13] (Habakkuk 2:1-3 KJV)

[14] AV1611. "KJV Dictionary Definition: vision" https://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-dictionary/vision.html (accessed September 29, 2019).

and, at times, a language that is unappealing to mainstream churchgoers. Moreover, they can be disarmingly transparent, straightforward, raw, stern, passionate, and driven. They are unwilling to disguise these characteristics to gain entrance into a system in which they do not identify.

During the past four years at Cafe Word Bookstore, many souls from all walks of life have encountered the diverse patrons and experienced the life-changing dynamics of this place. Exploring these customers' responses to this local bookstore in the Village has presented me with an opportunity to have conversations about their life circumstances and their personal religious perspectives. These conversations reaffirm the need for systemic change in our country, in the church, and in this community.

During the previous decade, local bookstores in communities around the globe have become almost non-existent. This is due, primarily, to the birth, monopoly, and transformative presence of online procurement, especially by Amazon. Cafe Word Ministry resurrected itself as a 21st century bookstore, re-appearing as an old wineskin within a new paradigm. A conversation with one individual revealed how some bookstores now partner with cafes, wineries, and artists to bring about new customer experiences. These encounters of mine at Cafe Word generate all kinds of collaborations that open new avenues for my ministry to operate in a non-parish setting. Cafe Word finds itself in this situation as it hosts open community events - Friday Night @ the Mic (FN@M), Sunday Word of Worship (WOW), Monday Bible Study (MBS) and Dancing My Prayers (DMP) Meetings. These same activities have positioned Cafe Word to become a gathering place that enables building spiritual bridges in a common space.

It is increasingly important to conceptualize church differently, especially for the GenX and Millennial generations whose church attendance has been declining at a rapid pace, especially among people ages 23-38. In 2019, the Pew Research Center reported "a wide gap between older Americans (Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation) and Millennials in their levels of religious affiliation and attendance."[15] According to their data, "more than eight-in-ten members of the Silent Generation (those born between 1928 and 1945) describe themselves as Christians (84%), as do three-quarters of Baby Boomers (76%). In stark contrast, only half of Millennials (49%) describe themselves as Christians; four-in-ten are religious "nones," and one-in-ten Millennials identify with non-Christian faiths."[16] The Pew Center also reports that

> Only about one-in-three Millennials say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month. Roughly two-thirds of Millennials (64%) attend worship services a few times a year or less often, including about four-in-ten who say they seldom or never go. Indeed, there are as many Millennials who say they "never" attend religious services (22%) as there are who say they go at least once a week (22%).[17]

The situation is both worrying and complex. Based on his own research and experience, Ben Windle, an author, speaker, and pastor, argues, "There is a fatigue in these new generations around the [Church's] attempt to just be cooler. It's a misread…. They're not walking away from God; they're walking away from a church culture."[18]

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[15] Pew Research Center, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *pewforum.org* October 17, 2019, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/ (accessed July 15, 2020).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] BenWindle, "ChurchPulse Weekly Conversations: Ben Windle on Leading Millennials," *Barna Research Group*, June 30, 2021, https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-windle/ (accessed August 5, 2021).

Time is of the essence. We must meet people where they are in their attempts to understand God. New Paradigm Ministry Models are really the New Wineskins for the 21st century "because they are 'grassroots, community empowering' instruments in the Lord's hand, they have the potential for influencing Christians, congregations, communities, and cities all across the U.S."[19] The McAlvany Intelligence Report informs us that every continent except North America is experiencing church growth.[20] The new wineskins of urban 21st century ministry—or Paradigm Shifts in Ministry—ultimately impact how we can deliver the gospel message in familiar as well as unfamiliar spaces and places.

There is a sense of urgency to mitigate this decrease in church membership in the United States. If the church is not growing, and 4.3 million Millennials are unaffiliated with religion, thus, missing from the pews, then the real question is what strategies do we need to develop to appeal to the next generation of ministers and religious leaders. How will they be influenced to step into leadership roles that will ensure continuity of embracing and endorsing the "Blood-Stained Banner" in the 21st Century? This urgency is of paramount concern as we imagine an entire generation that may face the threat of becoming devoid of ministerial leadership. Introducing a new paradigm that interests the target generation, the religious community, and the church must reimagine the next generation not as lost souls but as spiritual leaders-in-the-making.

A key component to this research was initially to examine, analyze, and assess the ten houses of worship that are within walking distance of Cafe Word Bookstore;

[19] Vision for 21st Century Ministry Design, "A Snapshot of the U.S. Church," McAlvany Intelligence Report.

[20] Ibid.

however, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented this research from working out as planned. Instead, I befriended local Millennials and inquired through them to learn about the different houses of worship nearby. All of these entities are experiencing decline in membership, notably in the Millennial category.

Clearly, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Old wineskins, however, are unable to accept new wine. The outspoken mindset of the present generation speaks to the need for the same outspokenness in the ranks of the country's spiritual leaders who are called to impart wisdom that will influence and guide their successors in assuming responsibilities and moving forward with their own vision. It is, therefore, essential that the Millennials be empowered to insert their own issues and challenges that, once analyzed, will be used as best practices to bring about cultural and spiritual change in this nation.

Cafe Word Ministry is a grassroots establishment that is mostly non-traditional by design. Any practices from traditional ministries have been transitioned into this one in ways that have supported its growth and given it some stability to further support its sustainability for the next generation.

# CHAPTER 3

## PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION - CHANGE IN THE DEMONSTRATION PROPOSAL FOCUS

A significant change in the Demonstration Proposal focus occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The original Goal 1 Strategy was to host a weekly FridayNight@TheMic platform event at Cafe Word Bookstore. In order to avoid a possible spread of the virus, it could not take place. In lieu of the original Goal 1 Strategy, I created THE WORD, a series of messages from scripture that I sent out on a weekly basis. The original hypothesis changed because the research subjects preferred text messaging verses a virtual FridayNight@The Mic. The research subjects rejected what I thought was going to work and they had a different response from what I expected. The texting proved to be more satisfactory because of the privacy factor that they desired.

On March 25, 2020, the Sunday following widespread economic shutdowns across the United States, I sent the first weekly text message, under the branding THE WORD, to approximately twenty-five Millennials, my target population. The purpose was to stay connected and for them to have a message of Hope to comfort and sustain them during this devastating moment in time. THE WORD was a simple, practical one-minute Divine message from God that loved on the human spirit with messages that focused on the Fruits of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control. My purpose was to nourish and ease the pain

they were experiencing. THE WORD proved, as they would describe it, "Spot On," meaning it was precise, exact, on target, faultless, and faithful. It had no need for heavy theological interpretation nor hermeneutical theory. It was just a relevant, revolutionary, restorative and, above all, practical Word from God—a one-minute touch from the Holy Spirit and that was all that was needed in that moment.

The onset and the quick spread of the pandemic impacted the human spirit of many Americans so profoundly that it became apparent to me that I was on the front line as a minister to the heart and minds of all of God's people. Now, over a year and a half later, I have written more than 70 weekly THE WORD text message sermons and sent them to over two hundred recipients each week.[21] I send these messages individually, one-by-one, so as to remain in personal contact with each of my Cafe Word disciples. Some of the followers have also passed the message on through their own wide social media networks, something that is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5 below.

This ministry has expanded to an intergenerational platform as well. Through a variety of economic impacts during the pandemic, I found myself the resident of a multigenerational household along with many of my Millennials, who were forced to move home or found themselves in similar situations. We now shared the same lifestyle which formed a relationship bond to discuss common concerns more open and freely. The Holy Spirit reminded me that my research title for the proposal is "involved participant observer." This process of observation is sourced from a research method that used to study a given social experience from a distance, with an air of objectivity, but now expands the process to participate in that experience. As a result, the observer makes

[21] See Appendix C - "THE WORD" Messages (03/2020-03/2021)

a commitment to its future and to become a member of the specific community of study, as an active agent, while studying the experience. My research followed this same course.

Text messaging is one of the most important advancements in communication, and the greatest benefit of text messaging is that it is the pathway that allowed me access to communicate instantly with my audience right where they were. In the companion of their cellphones, and in the click of a moment, I was able to minister THE WORD of God to them, which offered them much needed mental relief and spiritual comfort. Over the last decade, the mental stability of millennials has been a constant talking point in the medical community. The principles of the Missio Dei, Mission of God or sending of God, is the missional movement of meeting people where they are in the marketplace, the secular spaces in which they move. Navigating with them, in a defining moment to the place of their understanding of God, influenced my actions, and these principles designated my role to the mission and contributed to its success. As Jonas Kurlberg and Peter M. Phillips argue in their book, *Missio Dei in a Digital Age*, "We are addressing an unprecedented technological revolution. Every sphere of life from communication, work, economy, leisure, our homes, and health care is being digitized. These far-reaching changes demand careful consideration, and discernment by churches participating in God's redemptive work around the world. Digitalization of society is radically changing both the methods and conditions of missions."[22] Texting THE WORD gave Millennials a private space with the Divine Word as well as a personal space to respond to that Word without being judged by traditional response platforms, like Facebook which is publicly

[22] Jonas Kurlberg and Peter M. Phillips, *Missio Dei in a Digital Age*, (London, U.K: SCM Press, 2020), 1.

viewable. This proved to be one of the most comprehensive tools to get THE WORD to a hurting people.

More importantly, THE WORD spoke volumes to their immediate needs, frustrations, anger, agony, disappointments, dissolution, and misunderstandings. It also permitted them to respond to the Divine Word as well as to me, as their on-the-street pastor without hesitation or fear of being judged for their response. Sometimes a church is the last place where Millennials feel free to be themselves, speaking honestly and asking good questions. Generally, a group text is the easiest way to reach a large number of people at the same time; however, I was Divinely led to send the text to each person individually. It built a personal relationship with THE WORD and the respondents. A Two-On-One Private encounter with THE WORD and the Pastor is what they experienced. "And the Word was made flesh" in a text.[23] A new tradition was created as THE WORD met them right where they were, under lockdown, amidst a pandemic that had disrupted both the marketplace and church services.

For many of my Millennial subjects, meeting on Zoom was not desirable. In fact, they were suffering specifically from Zoom fatigue. Being forced to turn all personal and business activities onto their social media platforms contributed to the isolation as well as negative emotional stress of being locked down, quarantined, and working from home.[24] This created a feeling of incarceration, leaving some of them with a bitter sweet taste about the platform they worshipped on via online church services. They felt that their social media platforms had also been taken over by traditional churches who had in the

[23] (John 1:14 KJV)

[24] Manyu Jiang "The Reason Zoom Calls Drain Your Energy." *BBC.com.* 22 April 2020, https://www.bcc.com/worklife/article/20200421-why-zoom-video-chats-are-so-exhausting (accessed May 20, 2020).

past rejected, persecuted, and abandoned them. The churches themselves were relying on Zoom and YouTube to get their message out and promote a kind of fellowship as best they could. For many Millennials, however, it was a false fellowship. The best antidote to this artificial atmosphere is one of direct connection. As such, texting proved to be more satisfactory because of the privacy factor that they desired.

Because of the physical confinement that the pandemic demanded, and the mental and emotional adjustments that followed, they also had limited face-to-face interaction with their peers. Millennials' free will and social preferences were now challenged, and their mental well-being was severely under attack. Generation Z has actually been the most receptive to THE WORD via face-to-face conversation, which might signal a future return to the old tradition of human touch since a lot of this younger generation spends most of their time online. As such, they might value face-to-face communication in a more traditional setting. They are seeking God out and are the most progressive out of all of the generations. Gianpiero Petriglieri, Associate Professor at Insead, who explores sustainable learning and development in the workplace asserts, "The self-complexity theory posits that individuals have multiple aspects - context-dependent social roles, relationships, activities and goals - and we find the variety healthy." He goes further to say that "when these aspects are reduced, we become more vulnerable to negative feelings. Then this is the fact that aspects of our lives that used to be separate - work, friends, family - are all happening in the same space."[25] In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these negative feelings are not only exhausting the human mind and physical body but the human spirit as well.

[25] Ibid.

This demonstration project was designed to produce an assessment of a quasi-ministerial plan to evaluate Cafe Word Ministries' presence during the past 4 years in the Village of South Orange, N.J., and develop a means to impact those who convene at the physical meeting place, Cafe Word Bookstore. However, the devastation of the pandemic abruptly shifted the focus from the physical location of this ministry in the marketplace to a universal device of a cellphone text message virtual marketplace to reach out beyond Hip Hoppers, Millennials, and Zoomers to an even greater intergenerational subset of the population of the United States.

According to UN data, the U.S. 2020 population is estimated at 331,002,651 people at mid-year.[26] Presently, a dual crisis exists, the COVID-19 virus, which as of July 29, 2021, has infected 197,073,011 people worldwide and caused 4,210,030 deaths. At the same time, an enormous racial upheaval has brought to the light hundreds of years of deadly racial injustice and disparities.[27] This dual crisis has mentally occupied and impacted every human being in the United States.

[26] WorldOMeter.com, "United States Population," https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/us-population/ (accessed February 15, 2020).

[27] COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic, https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/ (accessed July 29, 2021, 18:22 GMT).

# CHAPTER 4
# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## Research Question 1: The Millennial Generation

I. Introduction to Millennials
II. Economic and Social-Structural Impacts on Millennials
III. Framing Millennials: Their Generational Predecessors
IV. Intergenerational Dialogue: Reflections of Baby Boomers and GenXers, the Parents and Grandparents of Millennials
V. Millennials and Religion

## Research Question 2: Morality & Hip Hop Culture

I. Millennials' Attitudes to Religion and Morality, as Shaped by GenX parents and Hip Hop Culture
II. Church Criticisms and Responses to Hip Hop Culture
III. Civil Rights (Moral) Movement vs. Hip Hop (Immoral) Culture
IV. Hip Hop Culture as a Moral Movement
V. The Spiritual and Moral Power of Hip Hop Music

## Research Question 3: Practical Theology for Ministering to Millennials

I. Expanding and Refocusing the Lens: A New Missional Movement
II. Rethinking the Role of Church Leaders: Handing Over the Microphone
III. Developing a "Hip Hop Hermeneutic": Linking the Secular and the Scriptural
IV. Using Hip Hop as Content and Delivery in Non-Parish Settings
V. Bridging the Gap: Reaching Younger Generations

**Research Question 1**

## INTRODUCTION

The first research question asks whether and why Millennials feel disconnected from religion, unlike their parents who are, statistically speaking, much more connected to religion. Was the previous generation stricter in their efforts to raise their children in a more religious environment? What shaped how religion has been passed down to the next generation? What are the issues that impacted the societal infrastructure that precluded Millennials the time to seek religious guidance?

This section will proceed with an introduction to the Millennial generation and then offer an analysis of the economic and social structures that have specifically impacted them. I will then attempt to further explain Millennials by referencing their predecessors, the Gen-X (Hip Hop) Generation, the Baby Boomers, the Silent Generation, and Greatest Generation. This will open a discussion on intergenerational dialogue between Millennials and their Baby Boomer and GenXer predecessors. Finally, I will close with a reflection on Millennials and their attitudes toward religion, with specific interest in their surveyed opinions of Christianity.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO MILLENNIALS

Millennials are the next generation of global leaders who are motivated, ambitious, self-confident, open to change, and technologically astute. They also have a natural gift for learning, making them the most well-educated generation in the 21st century. The term "Millennials" was coined by historians William Strauss and Neil Howe in their book *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, based on the

fact that the oldest member of the generation would graduate high school in the year 2000.[28] Most Millennials have earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the previous two generations when they were the same age.[29] They are very clear and detailed about their cultural values, their moral viewpoints, and their desire to make a major contribution to society.

Millennials have also been called the next great generation. They were born into a technological world that has benefited them as well as set them up for criticism for how quickly they appear to have created their own private social media cultures. Millennials make no apologies for their brilliance and wear it as a badge of honor, causing some in the older generations to characterize them as narcissistic. However, sometimes brilliance can be misunderstood and mislabeled in an effort to not allow the courageousness and creative integrity of the next generation to shape and lead society. Their essential humanity cannot be denied nor can anyone define the way in which their Divine purpose must unfold. The peaceful transfer of political power appears to be yet another crisis for Millennials as they assume political, social, and ministerial leadership positions on America's social media platforms given the many roadblocks they have already faced to achieve financial success and stability.

According to Strauss and Howe, "Most Millennials are the children of baby boomers and early Gen Xers.[30] It is generally agreed upon that Millennials are born between 1981 and 1996, and currently they are between 25 and 40 years of age.

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[28] William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, (New York: Quill, 1991).

[29] Pew Research on Social Trends, "The Rising Cost of Not Going to College," 11 February, 2014. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/ (accessed May 15, 2020).

[30] William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. (New York: Vintage Original, 2000), 54.

Millennials, also sometimes identified as “Gen Y,” are the largest generation in the U.S. totaling 72.1 million, giving them a greater population than their predecessor, Gen X.[31] Their age range is divided into two groups, Gen Y.1 (ages 25-29) and Gen Y.2 ages (29-39), and these groups have two different types of life paths and stages.

One of the primary characteristics of Millennials is their facility with the internet and virtual life. Marc Prensky, an education and e-learning thought leader, coined the term “Digital Natives” in 2001. “Digital Natives” refers to those who are “‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games, and the internet.”[32] Millennials are the generation that grew up with technology and social media, which has radically altered their experience of the world. In other words, they grew up tech savvy in ways that has given them opportunities to take advantage of their native “language” in order to navigate and create a space of belonging to fill the void in their lives created by the ongoing social, economic, and political crises they have faced over the last two decades. The social media platforms have, in many ways, framed their identities and allowed them to create an open space, set aside from their everyday lives, to communicate with far-flung peers who share some of the same misfortunes, which have generated a sense of generational common-cause.

## II. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL IMPACTS ON MILLENNIALS

Unfortunately, one economic crisis after another has forced many Millennials to accept lower wage work or to step into the unemployment lines or move back into the

[31] Statista Research Department, “U.S. Population by Generation 2019,” 20 January, 2021, https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/

[32] Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon*, MCB University Press, 9, no. 5 (2001): 1-6. *markprensky.com,* https://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf (accessed 13 March, 2021).

homes of their parents, carrying heavy student loans along with them. Many are worried they are simply unable to pay for basic costs of living.

Millennials have faced two significant economic crises through early adulthood: the 2009 Great Recession and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which accounts for the generational split that scholars are tracking. According to Jason Dorsey, a research consultant of Millennials and the president of the Center for Generational Kinetics, "One group is moving forward professionally and financially, while the other feels their life has stagnated."[33]

According to Pew Research on Social Trends, "Millennials are the first in the modern era to have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income than their two immediate predecessor generations (Gen. Xers and Boomers) at the same stage of their lifecycles."[34] In spite of these hardships, millennials still stand strong in their commitments to making contributions to society. Ethan Fosse, in his dissertation, "Cultural Continuity and the Rise of the Millennials: Generational Trends in Politics, Religion, and Economic Values," reports that "Although emerging from a continual process of intergenerational replacement, millennials have emerged as a distinct group with the potential to significantly alter the political, religious and economic lineament of American society."[35]

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[33] Hillary Hoffower, "There Are 2 Types of American Millennials, Says an Expert Who Studies the Generation—and the Difference Between Them Is Not Based on Their Age," *businessinsider.com*, 4 January 2020, https://www.businessinsider.com/2-types-of-millennials-mega-llennials-and-me-llennials-2020-1 (accessed February 27, 2020).

[34] Pew Research on Social Trends, "The Rising Cost of Not Going to College," 11 February, 2014. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/ (accessed May 15, 2020)

[35] Ethan Fosse, "Cultural Continuity and the Rise of the Millennials: Generational Trends in Politics, Religion, and Economic Values," (Dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, 2015), https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/17463122/FOSSE-DISSERTATION-2015.pdf?sequence=9 (accessed May 10, 2020).

Former President Barack Obama agrees. In his 2020 virtual commencement speech to the graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), he called attention to the inequalities that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, but noted:

> Injustice like this isn't new. What is new is that so much of your generation has woken up to the fact that the status quo needs fixing; that the old ways of doing things don't work; and that it doesn't matter how much money you make if everyone around you is hungry and sick; that our society and democracy only works when we think not just about ourselves, but about each other.[36]

Both Obama and Fosse indicate the vision and hope that millennials bring to their role in American society. The work of dismantling these injustices and refusing to be numbed by societal indifference speaks volumes to the strength and character of the millennial generation. I believe there is a Divine, innate strength that will enable millennials to usher in these changes.

## III. FRAMING MILLENNIALS: THEIR GENERATIONAL PREDECESSORS

Too often, generations are set up against one another as a contrast, giving the illusion of a breakage between each group of people born over a 15 to 20-year span. However, it is important to think about how previous generations have shaped a given generation, both positively and negatively.

Millennials are the great-grandchildren of the Greatest Generation, also known as the Traditionalists of America and the G.I. Generation, who were born between 1900 and 1920. Coined by NBC nightly News Anchor and author Tom Brokaw in his book of the same name, *The Greatest Generation*, they are also known as the World War II

[36] Barack Obama, "Read the Full Transcript of Obama's H.B.C.U. Commencement Speech," *The New York Times,* May 16, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/16/us/obama-hbcu-speech-transcript.html (accessed May 10, 2020).

Generation, which tended to obey rules and hold a great respect for authority.[37] Those who are still alive from this generation would now be in their 100s. They lived through the Great Depression and many of them fought and died in World War II for the causes of peace, justice, and freedom. Some went missing in action (MIA), and the U.S. government created a mission, Project Recovery, to never stop searching for them.

The Greatest Generation was also struck by two devastating crises: the Spanish Flu and the Great Depression of 1929. The Spanish Flu crippled the U.S. from 1918 to 1920 and killed 50 million people worldwide and then, a decade later, the Great Depression lasted a full decade, until World War II.[38] For the Greatest Generation, their sense of personal responsibility, integrity, humility, work ethic, service, and commitment were the characteristics that shaped their values and guided them with courage through the greatest threats of their lives: war, disease, and economic depression.[39] History, as has been said before, has a way of repeating itself. Those same generational values are now guiding Americans today through a national crisis and pandemic that is directly impacting Millennials.

Continuing the lineage down to the Millennials, members of the "Silent Generation" are the children or younger siblings of the Greatest Generation, who were born between 1925 and 1945 and now range in age from 75 to 95.[40] They were named the

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[37] Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation,* (New York: Random House, 1998).

[38] Hillary Hoffower, "Wounded by Both a Pandemic and Recession, Millennials Are Reliving the History of 100 Years Ago, *businessinsider.com*, March 14 2021, https://www.businessinsider.com/similarities-between-coronavirus-pandemic-spanish-flu-great-recession-depression-millennials-2021-3 (accessed February 27, 2021).

[39] Ibid.

[40] The term "The Silent Generation" was first recorded in print in *Time*, "The Younger Generation" November 05, 1951, http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,856950,00.html (accessed March 25, 2021).

Silent Generation since the children of their era were expected to be seen and not heard. However, walking in the footsteps of their parents or older siblings, they also developed strong values. They were loyal to their careers as well as their religious beliefs and were stable and dependable. War and economic depression were no stranger to them either, and they gave their descendants the opportunity for more freedom and education.[41]

Together, the Greatest Generation as well as the Silent Generation are the parents of the Baby Boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964. From the end of World War II through to the mid-sixties, the birthrate in the United States exploded, hence the coinage of their name. Seventy-six million babies were born in the United States during these two decades.[42] Baby Boomers came of age during radical social changes, including the birth of the great Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement. Until recently, Boomers held the record as the largest generational group in U.S. history before the birth of Millennials who are now the largest generation in this country's history.[43] Boomers are also the longest-living generation in history. They have had a significant impact on the economy as they became young adults at a time of great economic growth and wealth. Given the financial climate at the time, they focused on investment planning and purchasing homes and building up their retirement funds. They are also heavy spenders on good and services, and they still hold significant corporate and economic power. According to one estimate, "in the U.S. 54% of personal net worth belongs to

[41] Ibid.

[42] Brian Barnier, "Just How Many Baby Boomers Are There?" *Investopedia*. January 18, 2021 https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/baby_boomer.asp (accessed March 25, 2021).

[43] Richard Fry, "Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," *Pew Research Center*, April 28, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/ (accessed March 25, 2021).

boomers."[44] As a result of wealth and educational opportunities, Boomers were able to assist their children, Generation X, who are currently between 41 to 56 years of age (62.5 million in the U.S.) to assure that they got a good start in life. Boomers also exbibit a significant difference in their belief and opinions, creating a generational gap. They were not silent and challenged the status quo.

Generation X, also known as Gen Xers (65 million in the U.S.), were born between 1965 and 1980 and experienced the rise of personal computers, emerging technologies, and the end of the Cold War.[45] They are a generation who has been both blessed and, at the same time, cursed by many political crises. Set directly between the Baby Boomers and the Millennials, GenX Hip Hoppers were socialized by the Baby Boomer generation, whose greater economic and educational opportunities allowed many of their children to reap some of the benefits of their success. Baby Boomers built some bridges of opportunities for Gen X (Hip Hop) generation that supported many of their dreams and anchored some of them in a traditional mindset that transcended how they practiced their religious beliefs.

However, Gen X was also the catalysis for the breakthrough of Hip Hop music, which became a much-needed social voice in society that addressed marginalization and social injustices, specifically of the Black community. Whereas the previous generations had become by the end of the Civil Rights era. Hip Hop music planted a seed that grew into a global culture and social movements. Because of the authenticity of this music, it is

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[44] *Marketing Charts*, "Baby Boomers Possess the Majority of US Household Wealth," *Marketingcharts.com,* April 8, 2019. https://www.marketingcharts.com/demographics-and-audiences/household-income-107999#:~:text=Separating%20out%20net%20worth%20along,56%25%20of%20total%20household%20wealth (accessed March 26, 2021).

[45] *New York Times,* "This GenX Mess," *nytimes.com,* May 14, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/05/14/style/generation-xers.html (accessed May 7, 2021).

being passed down to future generations who will use and mix and transform that platform of music and popular culture to continue to challenge global injustices on the world stage in ways yet unseen. As a generational culture, Gen X stood firm on the foundational belief that their music was the voice for the marginalized and that it spoke up against racial and social injustices, like police brutality and racial inequality.

Hip Hop music emerged out of rapping, breakdancing, and graffiti art cultures, all of which expressed a generational disapproval of a society that many felt had failed them.[46] The impact of Hip Hop culture was felt not only by the music industry, but on the fashion world, art world, and theater industry as a result of their high profile. Gangsta rap drew even greater attention to police brutality. It also went mainstream, becoming more commercialized, financially lucrative, and growing in global stature and impact.

Now, fifty years later, Millennials and Generation Z, the emerging generation, are standing on the backs of the Hip Hop culture, and their identities have been shaped and passed down from that movement's historic influence. The core values and beliefs of Millennials have been cultivated from Generation X's Hip Hop roots of self-expression and authenticity, namely, what is authentic is what matters deeply to one's self.

Born between 1981 and 1996 (65.2 million in the U.S.), the Millennials are the technological residents of the internet and social media. They have become masters of the information highway and hold the title of "Digital Natives."[47] Their dialogue and interactions tend to be brief but meaningful. They have little patience for inefficient and poor service and will not hesitate to confront status quo. They also tend not to tolerate

[46] Rory Pq, "Hip Hop History, From the Streets to the Mainstream," *Icon Collective,* November 13, 2019, https://iconcollective.edu/hip-hop-history/ (accessed May 7, 2021).

[47] Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon*, 2001

individually disrespectful behavior, in the church, at work, or at home. According to Pew Research, Millennials are the most racially and ethnically diverse adult generation in the nation's history, and they entered the workforce at the height of an economic recession, which is predicted will affect American society for decades.[48] They are better educated than past generations but have also experienced many world crises since 9/11, which have affected their lifestyle and mental stability in some cases. As Hillary Hoffower notes, "Wounded by both a pandemic and recession, Millennials are reliving the history of 100 years ago."[49] In other words, Millennials are today experiencing what many of their Greatest Generation forefathers and foremothers similarly experienced.

## IV. INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE: REFLECTIONS OF BABY BOOMERS AND GEN-X-ERS, THE PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS OF MILLENNIALS

It is also important to understand the parents' cultural background of the Baby Boomer and Generation X (Hip Hoppers), and how their offspring, Gen Y (Millennials) and Gen Z (Zoomers), the emerging generation, have inherited certain elements of their philosophy and religious teachings. Millennials are the most educated, individualistic and liberal generation yet. They are not always willing to accept traditional belief systems and the generational teachings passed down from their parents. This cultural shift is one of the dramatic social changes driven by Millennials as well as one of the key components in understanding the reason for the decreasing rates of religious affiliation. They are not

[48] Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," *pewresearch.org*, January 17, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/ (accessed May 8, 2021).

[49] Hoffower, "Wounded by Both a Pandemic and Recession," March 14, 2021.

only highly educated, but self-confident, technologically savvy, and ambitious. Millennials often refuse to accept the philosophy of doing things the way that has always been done, and as a result, they challenge the hierarchy and status-quo. The major lifestyle difference is that while their parents are typically career-driven and dedicated hard workers, Millennials are mission-driven. They live their life in pursuit of purpose.

In the foreword to the book *Millennials and the Mission of God: A Prophetic Dialogue*, Eloise Meneses writes, "Millennials bear a load of real or imagined responsibility for the failures of the church and its evangelistic strategies, and hope somehow to be witnesses for Christ by showing themselves to be different than the perceptions and stereotypes commonly held by Christians."[50] This book, co-authored by Andrew F. Bush, a Baby Boomer, and Carolyn C. Wason, a Millennial, is a conversation between the two concerning the current problems of contemporary missions in the church and the response to the disruption caused by the Millennial generation. Both authors agree that a reformation, a deep spiritual renewal, is the most urgent challenge. According to Bush, "one of the most urgent challenges facing Western missions is the widening gulf between the conviction that missions is the beating of Christianity and the skepticism of millennials—at times even Christian millennials—who are not only wary of Christianity but repelled by Christian missions."[51] Wason agrees when she writes, "As a Millennial, I think missions needs to change. But as a Christian who believes in the importance of missions, I am not sure what such a change might be. I am as fearful of

[50] Eloise Meneses, "Forward," *Millennials and the Mission of God: A Prophetic Dialogue.* Andrew F Bush and Carolyn C. Wason (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), iv.

[51] Andrew F Bush and Carolyn C. Wason, *Millennials and the Mission of God: A Prophetic Dialogue,* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017), xiii.

ethnocentrism, Westernization and neocolonialism as the rest of my generation."[52] True to living out a life in pursuit of purpose, it is not this millennial's purpose as a Christian to apply her millennial culture as a frame of reference to judge Christian mission practices and behavior; at the same time, however, she is mindful of the many inconsistencies the church has demonstrated in answering Millennials' questions and concerns with an "authentic voice." This is where the real problem begins and it continues to cause the generational gap in religious affiliation to widen.

This dialogue between Bush and Wason specifically highlights possible bridging points. As a Baby Boomer, Bush admits that Millennials help provide him insight into how deeply missions need renewal if it will remain relevant in the twenty-first century. He observes, "For Western missions to be renewed in Christ, it will need to listen to Carolyn, and her fellow millennials."[53] It only takes one bold, courageous first step for the church to exercise its potential to embrace spiritual renewal and realign itself as the prophetic, life-giving, loving, healing, liberating institution that Wason and her fellow Millennials are expecting from the church.

In Bush's view, "The church is on the brink of something new." And I agree. The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing the church to reexamine many of its traditional values. Despite the fact that many of those values were originally designed to help guide lost souls, provide hope to the poor, strength to the weak, and uplift to the spirit of the marginalized and disinherited, these values are in fact ultimately hurting people, especially Millennials. As a result, Millennials are literally rebelling against the practices that earned the church labels such as hypocrite, oppressor, and persecutors. As Bush puts

[52] Ibid., 4.
[53] Ibid, xiv.

it, “The church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death.” The church, in other words, must be willing to die to itself daily and take up the cross and follow Christ into the 21st century.

## V. MILLENNIALS AND RELIGION

All of this leads to the question of what the Millennial Generation makes of religion. In my research and experience, I find that Millennials are a generation that believes in God but does not necessarily believe in the church. They were raised religious but have lower rates of affiliation with the church because of its ‘harsh traditional’ values. Many have seen or experienced hypocrisy within the church and no longer believe that the church practices what it preaches. Some of them are even unsure of the presence of God, believing in something larger than themselves but hesitant to call this being “God.” Millennials are arguing facts with what they have been taught in terms of faith. They don’t have a problem challenging the status-quo. Most of them know someone who is gay, trans, or queer-identified, and they know people who have had children without being married. They love these people, and they don’t feel like these people should be condemned when they haven’t done anything wrong. “Why would I support a vengeful God,” many seem to be asking, “who punishes my friends who have done nothing wrong?”

In surveys, Millennials often expressed a sense that they have little to show for their religious obedience and, therefore, are hesitant to show their obedience to God or have chosen not to, following a thought process such as, “If God stays out of my way, I’ll stay out of His way.” The popular expressions, “Spiritual but not Affiliated” (SBNA) or

"Spiritual but not Religious (SBNR), which emerged from the beginnings of online dating when users were directed to "check a box" under their religious category, is one that Millennials have continued using to self-identify a life that practices spirituality but does not regard organized religion as necessary or essential.[54]

However, Millennials are not the only generation that identifies with this phrase, according to Caroline Kitchener in *The Atlantic*: "Approximately sixty-four million Americans—one in five—identify as 'spiritual but not religious,' or SBNR."[55] According to Pew Research, millions of them are unaffiliated with, and reject, organized religion but still believe that there is something greater in control.[56] David G. Ford, writing in *The Bible and Digital Millennials*, cites Grace Davie who says that for Millennials, religion is "very largely an irrelevance in their day to day lives," but she claims they "have lost the rebellious hostility towards formal religion that was characteristic of earlier decades."[57] Ford goes on to conclude that "digital millennials are more indifferent but less negative towards the Bible than their parents and grandparents."[58] Not all Millennials are non-believers, it also must be stated. And yet it is true that Millennials have not embraced religion en mass, and they are victims of an economic breakdown that has disconnected them from traditional worship vineyards that have caused some mental trauma.

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[54] Caroline Kitchener, "What It Means to Be Spiritual But Not Religious," *The Atlantic*, 11 January 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/membership/archive/2018/01/what-it-means-to-be-spiritual-but-not-religious/550337/ (accessed March 29, 2021).

[55] Kitchener, "What It Means to Be Spiritual But Not Religious," *The Atlantic*. 11 January 2018,

[56] Pew Research Center. "Why America's 'Nones' Don't Identify with a Religion, *pewresearch.org*, August 8, 2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/08/why-americas-nones-dont-identify-with-a-religion/ (accessed March 29, 2021).

[57] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley and Sons, 2015, quoted in David G. Ford, *The Bible and Digital Millennials*, London: Routledge, 2019, ebook, *World Cat,* (accessed March 28, 2021), p. 106.

[58] David G. Ford, *The Bible and Digital Millennials*, London: Routledge, 2019, ebook, *World Cat,* (accessed March 28, 2021), p. 106.

One of the central ministerial concerns is how to adequately serve the Millennial generation, especially one that is increasingly separated from traditional religious institutions. As a result of this first research question analysis, I believe it is important to consider the distinctions between traditional religious settings versus non-parish settings and to consider how we might shape and offer non-restrictive, open environments that allows for transparent dialogue between attendees (i.e. "congregants") without criticism or personal judgment. This environment needs to promote non-intimidating conversations that are atypical in the traditional church, and it needs to be rooted in cultural forms that are familiar and "authentic" for Millennials. The real question here is how to alleviate some of the burdens inherited from a social infrastructure that has placed great emotional and physical constraints on Millennials, denying them to time and space to seek religious guidance.

**Research Question 2: Morality & Hip Hop Culture**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Research question #2 inquires further into attitudes of millennials about religion, morality, and Hip Hop. Does the decline in Millennials' religious involvement cause a decrease in their morality? Is there a correlation between faith and moral values? In a 2007 global Pew research study on faith and morality, results from much of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East indicated that "large majorities feel that faith in God is a necessary

foundation for morality and good values…. However, in the relatively wealthy and secular nations of Western Europe, large majorities suggest that morality is possible without faith."[59] This is also true in the Americas, including the United States, where the authors find that "views on these issues are also mixed" and note that "there is a significant age gap, with younger people significantly more likely to reject the notion that morality requires a belief in God."[60] Will the moral laws of the Old Testament shape and mold the next generation of Millennials religious leaders? The connection between religion and morality continues to be a historical and present-day point of contention that will continue to require ongoing dialogue as church and society agonize about the definition and measurements of values and vices.

In seeking to answer Research Question #2, I will extend my exploration of Millennials' attitudes to religion by focusing on their ideas about morality and their embrace of hip-hop culture. I will offer several key examples of Christian leader's criticisms of Hip Hop culture across the last several decades, which were responses that dismissed and demeaned the art and expression of the music. I locate this divide in generational differences between veterans of the Civil Rights Movement and the younger GenXers and Millennials. For many older Christians and church leaders, the Civil Rights era was defined by an explicit moral vision, so they tend to view Hip Hop music and culture as a secular and explicitly immoral form. In the last two sections, however, I argue that Hip Hop culture is a moral movement in and of itself and that there is great

[59] Pew Research Center, "Chapter 3: Views of Religion and Morality," *World Publics Welcome Global Trade—But Not Immigration*, October 4, 2007, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2007/10/04/chapter-3-views-of-religion-and-morality/ (accessed March 29, 2021).

[60] Ibid.

spiritual and moral power to Hip Hop music that the church must learn to tap into. Millennials have a consciousness and a righteousness of mind that must be explored to reveal and redeem the values they ushering into the world.

## I. MILLENNIALS' ATTITUDES TO RELIGION AND MORALITY, AS SHAPED BY GEN-X PARENTS & HIP HOP CULTURE

The frayed relationship between the traditional church and the Millennial generation in the United States developed from the unfinished business between their parents, who belong to the Hip Hop/GenX culture, and the church, which explicitly rejected their identity. Millennials inherited the ongoing problems after the church struggled with accepting their parents' authentic nature and how they lived out their truth. The Hip Hop culture had high hopes and dreams in their world that they were not willing to compromise for a traditional Gospel message that did not feed their spirit. The culture operated on a microwave mentality that said, "make it quick" or in Hip Hop language, "drop it like it's hot." They were in a perpetual mode of change, and fast speed was the flavor of the month. To step into their world, you had to be ready and willing to meet them where they were in their place of understanding God. The formation of spirituality had to offer a forum that welcomed and embraced God through the lens of different cultural experiences and expression. The church literally judged them by the content of their lyrics and failed to see the quality of their hearts, ultimately creating a generational gap in the last quarter of the 20th century.

In his book, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church*," Robb Redman describes the "homogeneous unit principle," an

observation that people are more receptive to the gospel in the company of their peers."[61] Although most churches are at least intergenerational, if not multicultural without question the behavior of the church after five decades still models this principle. One of the most controversial statements regarding Hip Hop was made by Pastor Calvin O. Butts in 1994 from the pulpit of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Singling out NWA, 2 Live Crew, and the Geto Boys (originally Getto Boys), he described their rap music as "filth."[62] In full, his statement is a direct demonization of the genre. He states:

> We're not against rap. We're not against rappers. But we are against those thugs. But we are against those thugs who disgrace our community, our women, who disgrace our culture, and who have absolutely nothing of redemptive value to offer except the legacy of violence and sexual assault and foul language.[63]

The memory of that sermon is still remembered in the minds of the culture, sampled as as it was—made (in)famous even—in a song that came out later that year: "Thuggish Ruggish Bone" by Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, featuring Shatasha Williams.[64] Although the context of the culture's music may be the initial thing to be evaluated for its variously negative and positive impacts on America culture, Butts' sermon and censorship actions overlooked the voice and soul of the music itself, which embraces the marginalized and criticizes social inequalities that have remained for decades a major point of contention in this society.

Christian objections to rap and Hip Hop are not only directed at gangsta rap. In a 2013 article in *The Gospel Coalition*, Geoff Botkin calls Christian (or "Reformed") Hip-

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[61] Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 12.

[62] Joel Anderson, "The Reverend vs. Rap," *Slate.com*, November 20, 2019, https://slate.com/culture/2019/11/slow-burn-tupac-biggie-reverend-calvin-butts.html (accessed March 29, 2021).

[63] Anderson, "The Reverend vs. Rap," November 20, 2019.

[64] Thugs-N-Harmony, Bone. "Thuggish Ruggish Bone" ft. Shatasha Williams. *Creepin on ah Come Up.* DJ U-Neek, 1994. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iw7OINGjm5c (accessed April 1, 2021).

Hop a so-called "art form," arguing that "it's a picture of weakness and surrender on the part of people who think they're serving God. And they're not. They are serving their own flesh. They're caving into the world. They are disobedient cowards."[65] He ultimately states that, "Reformed rap is the cowardly following of the world instead of confronting and changing it."[66] Again, these tunnel vision statements overlook the deeper aspects of the culture and the fact that many of the rappers, whether gangsta or "reformed," are simply living out the experiences of their lives in ways that have redeeming value and purpose.

Millennials are the offspring of the Hip Hop culture and their personal opinions and positionin regards to church and society are even stronger than their parents because of the many crises and catastrophic events that have disrupted their livelihoods and futures. The church, according to many Millennials, is no longer a place of refuge or comfort to minister to their misfortunes. They refuse to tolerate ongoing oppression or persecution nor to be in the presence of the persecutor. The pews of churches in America that are reserved for Millennials are increasingly empty, according New York University sociologist, Michael Hout.[67] The question still remains, what if the church utilizes the experiences of people for transformation rather than judgement? It is important and relevant that the church could be that place for Millennials just as it was once the place where their forebearers in the Southern Freedom Movement found its greatest support. Or

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[65] Qtd. in Joe Carter, "Debatable: Is Christian Hip Hop Ungodly," *The Gospel Coalitio,* December 2, 2013. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/debatable-is-christian-hip-hop-ungodly/ (accessed April 1, 2021).

[66] Ibid.

[67] David Masci, "Q&A: Why Millennials Are Less Religious than Older Americans," *pewresearch.org*, January 08, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/08/qa-why-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans/ (accessed April 1, 2021).

is the church going to remain silent as it did over 36 years ago when AIDS began spreading and sexual stigma kept much of the church from offering help?

The church has the potential to bridge the gap and eternally transform the community by partnering with the music and will power of Millennials, who inherited the deep desire of their parents to make a change in society. The church and Millennials must come together to provide social liberation for all. Pastor Cynthia B. Belt advocates the challenge for fruitful dialogue with her article, "Rap Music as Prophetic Utterance."[68] Belt blends practical experience and scriptural mandate to demand more accountability in the dialogue between the Black church and Hip Hop Culture. In "Binding the Straw Man: Hip Hop, African American Protestant Religion, and the Dilemma of Dialogue," Lerone A. Martin offers his profound thinking around the central question, "How can African American faith communities address and respond to Hip Hop music and culture in a manner that is faithful to the mission of Jesus Christ and that correspondingly addresses the realities of African American life?"[69]

The religious studies scholar Monica Miller, in the introduction to her book, *Religion and Hip Hop*, admits to trying to argue against the public moral panics that occur periodically about and against Hip Hop music and culture. But she admits in the introduction, "(Re)Finding Religion," that her "search—the quest for meaning—became…a frustrating and unobtainable fixation" because it was forcing her to search for "evidence" that Hip Hop was in fact a religious form and expression.[70] This leads her to

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[68] Cynthia B. Belt, "Rap Music as Prophetic Utterance," in *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture: Towards Bridging the Generational Divide,* edited by Emmett G. Price III (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 43-54.

[69] Lerone A. Martin, "Binding the Straw Man: Hip Hop, African American Protestant Religion, and the Dilemma of Dialogue," in *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture: Towards Bridging the Generational Divide,* edited by Emmett G. Price III (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 55.

[70] Monica Miller, *Religion and Hip Hop*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 2.

question the category of "religion" itself as well as the empirical methods for understanding church decline or "youth religiosity." She holds the survey data separate from "a more fundamental realization of the lived experiences of youth, as self-defined and self-manifested."[71]

I agree with Miller in her search for meaning here beyond statistical data, or what I think she has discovered in her examination of youth religiosity and how it is causing her to rethink the definition of religion via the internal experiences of the culture. If Christianity purports to be about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and not just an institutional religion, then what matters most are what people *say* they believe and feel and know for themselves. As such, the church's negative, critical response to the range of artistic expression within Hip Hop culture is hypocritical and partly explains youth declines in church attendance. Hip Hop culture is experiencing from the traditional church a denial of their free will to seek Christ just as they are in every area of their brokenness displayed through gritty, perhaps even "profane," language that speaks of their lived reality in the creative art form of their chosen music genre.

In his essay "Religion as a Cultural System," the anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes:

> In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life.[72]

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89-90.

Geertz goes on to note that "Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other."[73]

Hip Hop music, art, and dance are embodied and metaphysical expressions of particular ways of life and worldviews, which suggests that this cultural form can be considered a powerful and unacknowledged *religious* culture. Many Millennials do not identify with religion because religion does not identify with them. In his intergenerational dialogue with Carolyn C. Wason cited above, Bush (the Baby Boomer) admits that there is "hard work in hearing the "other." He insists that we can't turn "a deaf ear to those on the margins who can easily see how power has corrupted what should be beautiful: the message of Jesus."[74] As hard as it may be to listen to pain expressed in Hip Hop music, the greater challenge is to meet Hip Hoppers where they are and offer the Message of Jesus, which takes away the pain.

In 1982, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five changed the trajectory of the voice of Hip Hop music and the culture with their song "The Message," the lyrics of which convey the hard knock facts and anxieties of contemporary urban life. The chorus was a rallying cry of protest from the marginalized and the forgotten—the very people Jesus was most closely aligned:

> Don't push me, 'cause I'm close to the edge
> I'm trying not to lose my head
>
> It's like a jungle sometimes,
> it makes me wonder how I keep from going under

[73] Ibid., 90.

[74] Andrew F Bush and Carolyn C. Wason *Millennials and the Mission of God: A Prophetic Dialogue.* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017), xxi.

A child is born with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you, but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through
You'll grow up in the ghetto, livin' second-rate
And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate.[75]

Almost forty years later, this sounds like a new release on today's billboard charts, yet the song traces its own origins to the birth of Hip Hop, which originated at a party in the apartment block at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the west Bronx. Hosted by DJ Kool Herc and his sister, the party was an effort to raise money to buy back-to-school clothing.[76] In a matter of years, Hip Hop became a cultural phenomenon and a billion-dollar music industry even while the economic circumstance of its community of origin remained the same and in many instances got worse. In reality, no one truly listened. And if America did, it appears the expression of pain and frustration was not important enough to act on and change the underlining factors of inequality, racism, violence, and oppression.

What will the next forty years bring about? Like other songs that came before, "The Message" was the prophetic voice of Hip Hop. In 2012, "The Message" was named the Greatest Hip Hop song of all times by *Rolling Stone*, which reported that it "was the first song to tell, with hip-hop's rhythmic and vocal force, the truth about modern inner-city life in America—you can hear its effect loud and clear on classic records by Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, N.W.A., the Notorious B.I.G. and even Rage Against the Machine.[77] As Flash

[75] Duke Bootee, Grandmaster Flash, Grandmaster Melle Mel, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "The Message," Sugar Hill Records, July 1, 1982, https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/16148690/Grandmaster+Flash/The+Message (accessed May 20, 2021).

[76] Rebecca Laurence, "40 Years On from the Party Where Hip Hop was Born," *bbc.com*, October 21, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20130809-the-party-where-hip-hop-was-born#:~:text=And%20what%20happened%20to%201520,birthplace%20of%20hip%2Dhop%E2%80%9D (accessed May 20, 2021).

[77] Rolling Stone Magazine, "The 50 Greatest Hip-Hop Songs of All Time," *rollingstone.com*, December 5, 2012, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/the-50-greatest-hip-hop-songs-of-all-time-150547/outkast-b-o-b-2-92809/ (accessed May 20, 2021).

stated in an interview the following year, the song demonstrated that he and his group members "can speak things that have social significance and truth."[78]

Rather than redefining the category of religion based on the challenges of analyzing Hip Hop to locate it's "spirituality," as Monica Miller sets out to do, Jon Ivan Gill finds the aesthetic of religion to be simply and deeply absorbed into Hip Hop. In his book, *Underground Rap as Religion: A Theopoetic Examination of A Process Aesthetic Religion*, Gill defines the concept of "theopoetics" as "the attaching of an aesthetic nature to the perpetual intercreativity that takes place between God and the universe." [79] He writes, "In other words, theopoetics asserts that God's revelation is, in reality, irreducible to fixed dogmas and creatively transforms with the context in which it finds itself."[80] Calling God the "poet of the world," Gill extends the work of creation to rap poets who form their own quasi-religion.

Gill writes that theopoetics "is an aesthetic conversation between the world and ideas of God, where both are understood to be mysterious and continually progressive, reaching intermittent and incomplete destinations as they endlessly travel through existential phases, phases in which God has a potential new meaning."[81] This idea of "theopoetics" gives rap and Hip Hop a framework in which to cultivate their roots to be able to stand firm in the truth about their existence. This musical genre and cultural movement were created to stand on the front line of society as a reminder that God, who created these artists with a unique gifted voice to stand up for truth and justice, is a God

[78] Ibid.

[79] Jon Ivan Gill, *Underground Rap as Religion: A Theopoetic Examination of a Process Aesthetic Religion*, (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Gill, *Underground Rap as Religion,* 5.

who controls the universe and every organism of the world. The church needs to be in this conversation because the church is an organism that exists within this world and is shaped by the same cultural forces.

As I will argue below, I'm interested in the "quasi." I'm interested in expressions of faith and religious feeling that don't always look like traditional religion or ordinary worship services. God is always bigger than the ideas we have of him. Earlier, in Chapter 2, "Preliminary Analysis," I referred to my pre-COVID demonstration project as "a quasi-ministerial plan that will evaluate Cafe Word Ministries' presence during the last four years in the Village of South Orange." While this plan needed to be significantly changed due to the pandemic, even that change has been part of "the Plan." The church, meaning Christians and Christian leadership, needs to be fluid and adaptive, meeting people where they are instead of expecting them to conform to the traditional religious structures and expressions that may have better met the needs of older generations. God is already at work amongst the Millennials and within Hip Hop culture. I argue that we don't need to bring "them" to the church, we—the church—need to go to them, out in society-at-large, out in the marketplace, to learn about God ourselves. In other words, we need to pay attention to the insight and spiritual power of Hip Hop and the Millennial generation.

## II. CHURCH CRITICISMS AND RESPONSES TO HIP HOP CULTURE

Hip Hop music and culture, its musicians and rappers, have faced near-constant denigration and critique from mainstream (and often White) culture in the United States.

In *Urban God Talk: Constructing A Hip Hop Spirituality,* Andre E. Johnson argues, "As framed and constructed by the media and even some practitioners, Hip Hop is considered a hyper-violent misogynistic culture devoid of anything holy, scared and good."[82] Perhaps most famously, in 1990 Tipper Gore wrote an opinion article for the *Washington Post* titled "Hate, Rape, and Rap," which objected to the vulgarity of some Hip Hop lyrics and the threat of a negative influence on the nation's children. Gore wrote, "Our children are being sold a social dictionary that says racism, sexism, and antisemitism are okay."[83]

This "What-About-the-Children?" argument became quite common in the 1990s as "gansta rap" grew in popularity and reach. According to Betty Winfield in her article "Because of the Children: Decades of Attempted Controls of Rock 'n' Rap Music," many people came to believe that this music would lead to children "modeling…bizarre behavior, as well as imitating alien sounds, speaking taboo words, emulating violent lyrics, fulfilling sexual desires, copying the performers' outlandish antics and being overwhelmed by extreme audience reactions."[84] But Joshua Swanson argues that this popular criticism was less a direct threat to Hip Hop artists than a series of court cases, like Skyywalker Records v. Navarro (1990) and Davidson v. Time Warner (1997), both

[82] Andre E. Johnson, *Urban God Talk: Constructing a Hip Hop Spirituality* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013), x.

[83] Tipper Gore, "Hate Rape, and Rap," *The Washington Post*, January 8, 1990, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1990/01/08/hate-rape-and-rap/b4c16c35-4e96-4dec-8866-68ff6c1350f4/ (accessed May 27, 2021).

[84] Betty Houchin Winfield, "Because of the Children: Decades of Attempted Controls of Rock 'n' Rap Music," in *Bleep! Censoring Rock and Rap Music*, edited by Betty Houchin Winfield and Sandra Davidson (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 10-11, quoted in Joshua Swanson, "Talk This Way; A Look at the Historical Conversation between Hip-Hop and Christianity," Thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2020, p. 29.

of which sought to force "rap artists to clean up their songs and lyrics."[85] Ultimately, the albums were deemed "of artistic merit" by the courts and were not subject to censorship.

This fear and hatred of Black music and cultural expression is an old sentiment in this country. Joshua Swanson quotes one critic whose opinion reflects perfectly these 1990s concerns though it was written in 1899 about the newfangled music called "Jazz":

> A wave of vulgar, filthy, and suggestive music has inundated the land… with its obscene posturing, its lewd gestures. Our children, our young men and women are continually exposed… to the monotonous attrition of their vulgarizing music. It is artistically and morally depressing and should be suppressed by press and the pulpit.[86]

Johnson quotes Maureen Anderson's article, "The White Reception of Jazz Music in America," where she recounts that "motivated by political and racial concerns, many jazz critics during the Harlem Renaissance publicized their dislike of jazz music in order to express their dislike of African Americans."[87] Swanson goes on to note that the music genres of jazz and hip hop have hurt relationships between musicians and the church, "however, Jazz eventually overcame that stereotype. If Jazz could do this, then so could Hip-Hop."[88] Indeed, in spite of such negative viewpoints, Hip Hop's authenticity—like that of jazz—shaped the content and the method in which these artists expressed their experience and highlighted the Black Urban communities' experience of struggles with racism, injustices and hatred.

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[85] Swanson, "Talk This Way; A Look at the Historical Conversation between Hip-Hop and Christianity," p. 29-34.

[86] Patrick B. Hill, *Deconstructing the Hip-Hop* Hype, 104, quoted in Swanson, "Talk This Way; A Look at the Historical Conversation between Hip-Hop and Christianity," thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2020, 35.

[87] Maureen Anderson, "The White Reception of Jazz Music in America," African American Review 38, no 1 (Spring 2004): 135, quoted in quoted in Swanson, "Talk This Way; A Look at the Historical Conversation between Hip-Hop and Christianity," p. 35.

[88] Swanson, "Talk This Way; A Look at the Historical Conversation between Hip-Hop and Christianity," p. 36.

However, not all of the criticisms of Hip Hop originate in White fear or hatred of Black music and culture. Some of the criticisms and concerns have also come from preachers and leaders of the Black Church, which serves as a reminder that Hip Hop culture is not a universal "Black Culture" and that the terms "Black Church" and "Hip Hop" are also never one thing alone.

I have already quoted the (in)famous sermon above from Rev. Calvin Butts, but writers and academics cite many others. Michael Brandon McCormack, for example, quotes an anonymous preacher who argued from the pulpit of a prominent African American church, "If you don't want to get shot by the police…keep your ass out of stolen cars!!!"[89] McCormack writes that this minister was objecting to being pressed into protesting police brutality for the sake of a young victim in that city: I'm not marching!" he thundered emphatically. "This is the wrong poster boy for social justice. He's a criminal! He's a thug…!" And in subsequent sermons over the next several months, the minister continued to preach that what African Americans needed was not "a renewed Civil Rights Movement, but a radical Civil Responsibility Movement."[90]

Before the Hip Hop culture was born, the Black Church had been teaching and practicing how to live as Christ did amidst great oppression, and now they must develop new practical strategies to restore and reconcile the broken parts of this tradition that have pushed away many from the younger generations. The church is supposed to represent the character of Jesus, but truly this is not how Jesus would have handled His children who had the courage to standup for righteousness in a unique way. Peculiar, erratic and

[89] Michael Brandon McCormack, "Black Churches, Moral Panic, And The Empowerment Of Black Youth In The Era Of Hip-Hop," *Churches, Blackness, and Contested Multiculturalism*, edited by Smith R.D., Ackah W., Reddie A.G. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 241-264.

[90] Ibid.

outlandish as Hip Hop culture may be, what has set it apart from what is ordinary to the tradition of the church is the reality of these rap artists' consciousness and their own awareness of their unique thoughts and feelings about who they are in the world as well as their tremendous influence that is creating change in society.

The church has a responsibility to take an introspective look, deeply examining the thoughts and feelings reflecting on the personality and actions of the church and considering their own motivations to get a clear understanding of the root cause of such an uncharacteristic mental state of behavior. According to Emmett G. Price III, in his book, *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture: Towards Bridging the Generational Divide,* "The Black Church also served to offer large doses of spiritual centering to offset the rather racist aggression by unyielding provocateurs of hatred."[91] The behavior of the church with regard to Hip Hop is, in my view, unacceptable in the eyes of God. Johnson states, "many spiritual leaders of all faiths indict the entire culture of hip hop and promote it as the work of the devil (or Evil One).[92] Price argues that "no previous generational divide has been as extreme, volatile, and destructive as the present divide between the Civil Rights Generation and the Hip Hop Generation."[93] This divide has negatively impacted God's vision and mission.

I disagree with some of these church leaders' views because the creation of the Hip Hop culture was not a mistake, nor an afterthought, but God's Divine purpose and plan for the culture, with all of its courage and creativity and shock. Unlike the Black Church, Hip Hoppers have never lost sight of who they are and what exactly it is that

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[91] Emmett G. Price III, *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture: Towards Bridging the Generational Divide,* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), xi.

[92] Johnson, *Urban God Talk*, x

[93] Price, *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture*, xiv.

they stand for. In Price's view, "With no heroes in plain sight, these youth, passionate with the same urgent desires for survival and hope that their parents and grandparents carried, created their way from the bottom of America's belly one rhyme, piece, and step at a time.[94] There has never been any shame in their game. Hip Hop culture is the descendent of the heritage of African languages, traditions, and religions. They have placed an indelible mark as the generation whose identity will not be able to be forgotten or removed. Hip Hop will never die because its roots run long and deep in the African heritage. Hip Hop artists laid their stones in the River Jordan so that the world will remember that they once crossed over, holding up the blood-stained banner.

The Black Church must regain a sense of God's vision and mission if it is to work for Divine good in the lives of the younger generation. Time is of the essence, and deep committed conversations must be had in order that millennials become a greater focus of outreach by the Black Church. University of Pennsylvania chaplain Charles L. Howard leads this call in his article "Deep Call to Deep: Beginning Explorations of the Dialogue between the Black Church and Hip Hop," where he draws attention to the numerous "contact points, intersections, and integrations" that the two generations share.[95] His focus is on advancing the dialogue towards progressive results, as well as challenging both the church and the culture by offering strategies of success grounded in prophetic reflection.

The church and society at-large has not been particularly good at serving and caring for the younger generation. Cathy J. Cohen's book, *The Boundaries of Blackness:*

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Charles L. Howard. "Deep Call to Deep: Beginning Explorations of the Dialogue between the Black Church and Hip Hop," in *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture: Towards Bridging the Generational Divide,* edited by Emmett G. Price III (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), xvii.

*Aids and the Breakdown of Black Politics*, demonstrates this failure amidst the AIDS crisis of the 1990s, a crisis that greatly affected younger African Americans. In a review of Cohen's book, Michael K. Brown writes, "Cohen documents a failure of leadership. Black elites were slow to respond and when they did, their response was grudging and failed to acknowledge the dimensions of the problem. Eventually, they lent their support to provision of health and social services to those afflicted by AIDS but continued to condemn the life-styles of black gay men and drug users."[96]

In the same way that the crisis of AIDS was ignored and failed to transform religious thinking in Black communities, the crisis of Millennials' future in churches and lack of affiliation with religion continues to be largely ignored and unexamined. The church appears to be waiting yet again for decades to pass, refusing to accept their responsibility to care for the spiritual maturation of the younger generation. Are church leaders intimidated or are they in denial about how they might responsibly love and lead without judgement?

We are currently at a critical juncture because the Hip Hop generation is now the parents of the Millennials and the grandparents of the Gen Z and Gen Alpha who were born for such a time as this with the innate spiritual aptitude and ability to continue the work for justice and freedom for all, not only for Black people but for all of God's people. The Hip Hop generation carries with them the rhythms of African music that complement the rhythms of their lives. Hip Hop is a common ground, I believe, on which to create a blueprint for prophetic dialogue. This music and culture is the Love Language,

[96] Michael K. Brown, review of *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics,* by Cathy J. Cohen, *American Political Science Review*, *94*(2), 457-458. doi:10.2307/2586039 (accessed May 5, 2021), 457.

a call for Peace between people, including Black people. A people whose ancestors were sold and enslaved, crucified daily at the hands of White supremacy, racism, injustice and pure evil, have emerged from that terrible history bearing strength, courage, resiliency, endurance, unity in adversity, and honor to die for a purpose so that their descendants might continue to drive change in America, continue bending the moral arc of the universe towards a Divine justice.

## III. CIVIL RIGHTS (MORAL) MOVEMENT VS. HIP HOP (IMMORAL) CULTURE

This critique of Hip Hop as needing a "Civil Responsibility Movement" indicates, I think, a generational division between those who participated in or were shaped by the Civil Rights Movement and the younger generations who came after. African American churches and its leaders were central organizing features of the Civil Rights Era, and Christian spirituality was at the core of the fight against racial and economic injustice. For many people in the traditional church, hip hop culture looks and sounds secular (some would say profane) and seems to exist outside the boundaries of the church. The pastor's notion of a "Civil Responsibility Movement," cited above, seems concerned primarily with a return to the supposed respectability of the Civil Rights Era. But he forgets that Dr. Martin Luther King and others were considered irresponsible and troublesome rabble rousers in their own time. The key question to ask when looking at each of these cultural movements is, like Christ, who is speaking out against decades of racial injustice, discrimination, and the lack of freedom for all people, particularly people of color.

It may appear as though the dream that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. lived out has been shattered and the hope of experiencing the Beloved Community is impossible, but that is so far from the truth. In Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s book "Strength to Love," Coretta Scott King writes, "By reaching into and beyond ourselves and tapping the transcendent moral ethic of love, we shall overcome these evils. Love, truth, and the courage to do what is right should be our own guideposts on this lifelong journey."[97] The truth of this message is as true today for Millennials and Hip Hop culture as it was true for their elders in the Civil Rights era.

In an NPR story, "Hip Hop: Today's Civil Rights Movement?", journalist Scott Simon writes that "Hip-hop culture, with its street rhythms and explicit lyrics, is more relevant in advancing civil rights today than the peaceful messages of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., author Todd Boyd says."[98] According to Boyd, "I would suggest that you might get a better read of what's going on in the world of Black people today by listening to DMX on *It's Dark and Hell is Hot* than by listening to repeated broadcasts of Martin Luther King speeches." It's not that Boyd is criticizing King here. Instead, as Boyd says in the interview: "I would suggest that Martin Luther King and his politics are very specific to a certain time and it's important for us to learn from that, but if we want to talk about the present and the future, hip hop is much more immediate and much more relevant. We're in a moment where we can't simply look at things from that 1960s perspective and expect for it to hold up in the present day."[99]

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[97] Corretta Scott King, "Forward," *Strength to Love*," by Martin Luther King, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 7.

[98] Scott Simon, "Hip Hop: Today's Civil Rights Movement?" *npr.com*, 1 March 2003, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1178621 (accessed May 1, 2021).

[99] Ibid.

So how can the church, which does not often identify itself with this Hip Hop message of social liberation in these times, re-engage with the progressive and "conscious" forms of rap and Hip Hop community? How do we reform our church communities to make them a welcoming place for all? bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress* warns us of the dangers of being inflexible when it comes to teaching others. She writes "To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin." (13) She challenges us to reach our "congregants" where they are in their journey. Rather than bringing them to us, we should go to them.

Efrem Smith, senior pastor of The Sanctuary Covenant Church in Minneapolis and coauthor, with Phil Jackson, of *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture,* was asked in a recent interview: "Why should the church care about hip-hop culture?" Smith responds profoundly: "Because the church is called to care about God's heart for the poor and marginalized, and that's the state of affairs in most of our urban communities."[100] And the convection of this statement, according to the interviewer, Robert Gelinas, proves that Smith clearly understands the dynamics of the culture and supports it as well. Smith is a strong advocate who believes that if the church is going to do its job in urban communities, it too must learn to embrace the culture. He goes further to say, "If the church really wants to have a relevant and transforming urban youth ministry, it must care about hip-hop culture. Sadly, many urban churches are in

[100] Robert Gelinas, "Bringing Hip-Hop to Church," *urbanfaith.com*, March 2009, https://urbanfaith.com/2009/03/bringing-hip-hop-to-church.html/ (accessed May 15, 2021).

crisis because, by rejecting hip-hop culture, they are rejecting young people themselves."[101]

Smith calls for a renewed engagement between the church and youth culture, with Hip Hop serving as the bridge. In effect, he calls for rewinding the lens back to the Civil Rights Movement, where the church was on the front line of the demonstrations alongside the youth and young adults "intimately and passionately involved in the church and advancing the kingdom values of justice and reconciliation."[102] However, Smith's experience with colleagues in urban churches, revealed the struggle they have with equipping youth through new and creative methods to lead the movement to transform their communities.

## IV. HIP HOP CULTURE AS A (MORAL) MOVEMENT

Hip Hop culture and music is the voice of today, as fowl and ugly as some of it may appear to be. Its leading artists are expressing their frustration with the ghetto, with police brutality and racial profiling, with poverty and unemployment, all of which has been occurring long before this devastating pandemic. Hip Hop music is conveying the everyday life that these artists live within, including their heartfelt and heart-wrenching feelings about their lives, neighborhoods, and cities, which are largely reflective of the consequences of neoliberal government policies. The authentic anger in some of the lyrics of Hip Hop is the voice of the marginalized and disinherited, the very people who drew the attention and love of Jesus during His life. This is a collective voice that does

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.

not fear telling the truth. To silence the power in the voice of Hip Hop is to silence the imagination and the possibility of hope to change conditions and gain real freedom.

Hip Hop is a voice that can effect social change in the 21st century. Assata Shakur famously stated, "It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must Love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."[103] The late John Lewis agrees, "The work of love, peace, and justice will always be necessary, until their realism and their imperative takes hold of our imagination, crowds out any dream of hatred or revenge, and fills up our existence with their power."[104] In order to understand the Hip Hop cultural movement's search for freedom, Cathy Cohen, in her afterword, "When Will Black Lives Matter?" from *The Hip Hop and Obama Reader*, draws a parallel with the creation of BYP100, a group of young black activist between the ages of 15 and 35 who are young organizers who know the impact of putting their bodies on the line to "disrupt everyday life and to remind those with power that Black Lives Matter." Cohen's point is that "BYP100 is an organization that declares itself to be unapologetically black and insist on radical black leadership." She goes further to say, "These young people who understand the governing process and have developed their own policy agenda—'The Agenda to Keep Us Safe'" (Black Youth Project 100, 2014). In other words, Cohen believes, "while they engage in policy debates, they also understand the limits of trusting the neoliberal state to secure their freedom."[105] She says

[103] Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*, 1987, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001).

[104] John Lewis, *Across that Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America,* (Hachette: New York, 2012), 8-9.

[105] Cathy Cohen, "When Will Black Lives Matter?" *The Hip Hop and Obama Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 287.

her focus is on neoliberalism and the multicultural turn because "it is a reminder of the sustained attack on the basic humanity of poor black people."[106]

By way of example, it is worth looking closely at one major rapper. On April 9, 2021 Hip Hop lost an icon, Earl Simmons, a.k.a. DMX, a legend of legends and one of the most authentic influential rappers in the history of Hip Hop. He was remembered as a man with great humility and whose thoughtfulness was ever present in his character. He was an influence to some of the top rap stars, most notably, Kendrick Lamar, a member of a younger generation of Hip Hop artists. DMX gave his life to the world. He was a man of seeming contradiction but who many saw as uniting the sacred and the profane through his music. In the *PitchFork* article, "How DMX Found God," Clover Hope notes that "Simmons was a Christian who looked to God for salvation on the same records he rhymed about child rape and necrophilis."[107]

The genesis of his career began at the turn of the century with DMX soon becoming the biggest rapper on the planet. The violence in his music was a symptom of the fear and pain, some of which was self-inflicted, and some imposed by those who fronted as his mentor and friend. "But DMX wasn't a rapper in the trenches," writes music critic Sheldon Pearce, "he was a messiah in the gutter, painting a portrait of a community laid desolate by corruption, and the sociopaths its conditions were breeding."[108]

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[106] Ibid.

[107] Clover Hope, "How DMX Found God," *PitchFork.*com, April 13, 2021, https://pitchfork.com/thepitch/how-dmx-found-god/ (accessed April 22, 2021).

[108] Sheldon Pearce, "It's Dark and Hell Is Hot," pitchfork.com, March 5, 2017, https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/22940-its-dark-and-hell-is-hot/ (accessed April 22, 2021).

DMX didn't just rap, he preached. He spoke an authentic Word, and he lived it out in a peculiar way. He lived out the meaning of life and all of what it meant to live life more abundantly. He understood the nature of the flesh and the demons that attacked him daily. He understood that the flesh is weak but the Spirit is willing. From what his eyes could see and understand, he never could imagine living five decades. Although he admitted that his flesh was weak, his Spirit was willing to do the will of God in the unimaginable way that the power of the Holy Spirit allowed him to. His prayers were his saving grace, his prayers became his praise, they became a fire in his heart, for "The prayers of the righteous availeth much."[109] When he prayed, to borrow some of the words from the great Fred Hammond song, "When You Praise": he had a fire in his heart consuming every part because he knew the God he served would make his presence known.[110] His prayers were his praise and his praise bound, confused, and broke the enemy, allowing DMX to triumph in God's will.

According to Hope, "DMX's salvation was inevitably tied to hip-hop's." Hope traces DMX's authenticity and "gritty vulnerability on records and in his performances" to the explosion of rap into the mainstream in the late '90s and a turn away from the flashy wealth and extravagance to "brave, hardened, and angry songs that more gravely reflected the tragedies under which the culture was born, not where it had arrived. His frenetic energy was nothing without his spirituality."[111]

Especially important is Hope's observation regarding the influence DMX had on the religious and spiritual lives of his fans:

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[109] (Psalm 37:25 KJV)

[110] Fred Hammond & Radical For Christ, "When You Praise," *Purposes By Design*, Sony Music, 2000.

[111] Hope, "How DMX Found God," *PitchFork.*com

> For young music fans in the ’90s and early 2000s, DMX’s music might have been their first genuine interaction with religion outside of an older family member pushing them into the church. Black upbringings tend to rub up against the whiteness of Christianity, a way of life thrust onto Black Americans as an escape and an explanation for a harsh existence; in which case, religion is a method of coping born from cruelty and a sometimes-inadequate surrogate for therapy. DMX stayed alive continually because of it.[112]

In this respect, DMX should be considered a Christian religious leader operating mostly outside the bounds of the traditional church and its hierarchies and organizations. “Though he never formally became a pastor, X said he felt the calling,” Hope writes. “He got ordained as a deacon at an Arizona church, and in 2019, he led a prayer at one of Kanye West’s Sunday Services. Whereas West positioned himself on the same level as God, choosing to align religion with power, X was an anxious servant of the Lord who viewed religion as a route to safety.”[113]

Consider, for example, some of the prayers he famously offered during his live concerts: “In my heart, I mean well. But if you help me to grow, then what I have in my heart will begin to show,” or the personal testimonies he would speak to his fans and concert goers: “My relationship with God has gotten so much stronger. He’s always has his hand on me. I didn’t always go where he wanted me to go. But He always had me. Now that I’m actually listening and being obedient, life is so much better.”[114] “Let us pray,” DMX announces near the end of one of his most famous performances, at the

[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Everyday Power, “50 DMX Quotes About God and Rap,” https://everydaypower.com/dmx-quotes (accessed April 23, 2021).

much-maligned Woodstock '99 festival, as he begins to recite his song, "Ready to Meet Him," without musical accompaniment.[115] A portion of the prayer reads as follows:

> And I thank you for the love that, they've given to me
> I will not abuse it, nor will I lead them astray
> You see I love them like children, that I see every day
> And I pray, no we pray, together
> Get us through the bad weather, and we'll love you forever
> Let your thought and my heart, go hand in hand
> I first thought, but to start, but I stand a man
> And for as long as I can, as long as you permit me
> Please give me, the strength I need to live, bear with me
> Amen.[116]

In word and in prayer, DMX used his stage presence to both speak and rap about the both the great tribulations and spiritual victories of his life.

The same is true for many other Hip Hop artists, especially, but not only, those associated with the "conscious hip hop movement." Take for example, Kendrick Lamar, one of the biggest rappers and a member of the millennial generation. In his essay, "Hol'up: Post-Civil Rights Black Theology within Kendrick Lamar's *Section.80* album," Daniel White Hodge considers the evidence on Lamar as a "solid hip-hop spiritual mentor."[117] Hodge argues that Lamar is an important spiritual figure for at least three reasons:

> 1) emerging adults (Gen Ys and Gen Zs) see Kendrick as a post-soul spiritual guide; 2) white emerging adults have come to appreciate and love him and have grown up on his music; 3) Kendrick is a symbol for a post-civil rights context and represents the sacred, the secular, and the profane exceptionally well.[118]

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[115] Thomas Hobbs, "DMX, Woodstock '00: A Landmark for Rap and American Realism, *theguardian.com,* Aug. 12, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/aug/12/dmx-woodstock-99-iconic-festival-set-rap-hip-hop (accessed April 23, 2021).

[116] DMX. Prayer (Woodstock'99), YouTube.com, August 7, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brjDPZ1C2CE (accessed May 1, 2021).

[117] Daniel White Hodge, "Hol'up: Post-Civil Rights Black Theology within Kendrick Lamar's *Section.80* album," *Kendrick Lamar and the Making of Black Meaning*, edited by Anthony B. Pinn, Christopher M. Driscoll, Monica R Miller. (Taylor & Francis: New York, 2019), 2.

[118] Ibid., 2.

This blend is important to consider when thinking about the spirituality of a secular musical genre. According to Hodge, "God is doing something within those secular, evil, and corrupt spaces, and in those spaces, the chance and possibility of a 'gospel,' or good news, to actually do what it is supposed to do, can bloom and prosper."[119]

One needs to look no further than to hear Ms. Lauryn Hill describe her art and artistic vision to see how God moves through this music. As "one of the most versatile musicians in hip-hop," according to *Billboard*, Hill is a hugely influential GenX rapper and songwriter.[120] She also happened to be born in East Orange, New Jersey and raised just up the road from Cafe Word in South Orange, where she continues to reside. She broke into fame via the Fugees and became most noted for her multiple award-winner album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, which is full of a resounding Love and power that crosses the genres of Neo Soul, R&B, Hip Hop, Hip Hop Soul, and progressive rap. Hill made history at the 41st Grammy Awards when she became the first Hip Hop artist to win the Album of the Year. She also was the first women to take home five Grammy Awards in one night, breaking the glass ceiling for women in music and Hip Hop by achieving these two milestones.[121] "*Miseducation,*" writes Wanna Thompson, "is a staple for those who find solace in lyrics providing clarity on love, heartache, motherhood, and God."[122]

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[119] Ibid., 5.

[120] *Billboard,* "#7 Lauryn Hill," in "Greatest of All Time: The 10 Best Rappers of All Time," *billboard.com*, November 12, 2015, https://www.billboard.com/photos/6723017/the-10-best-rappers-of-all-time (accessed August 5, 2021).

[121] *Tidal*, "Writers Reflect on Ms. Lauryn Hill's 'The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill,' *tidal.com*, August 25, 2018, https://tidal.com/magazine/article/ms-lauryn-hill-miseducation-20-years-writers/1-52256 (accessed August 4, 2021).

[122] Ibid.

After much personal turmoil, Ms. Lauryn Hill took a sabbatical in 1999 from the music industry "to live a life of normalcy" and be with her family. She took an introspective look at her life and her spiritual relationship with God to gain guidance and direction on her future. In a 2021 interview with *Rolling Stone*, she looks back over the past 20 years and expresses her gratitude to God:

> I appreciate the people who were moved by this body of work, which really represented a lifetime — up to that point — of love, experience, wisdom, family and community investment in me, the summation of my experience from relationships, my dreams, inspirations, aspirations and God's ever-present grace and Love in my life through the lens of my 20-something but wise-sage existence.[123]

Unfortunately, Ms. Lauryn Hill's spirituality was criticized by some self-righteous people at the time, who got hung up on her being an unwed mother and making secular music. In recalling those "bulls#t…forces and energies," Ms. Lauryn Hill responds powerfully: "they may seek to corrupt and discourage, to disrupt and distract, to divide, and sabotage…but we bore witness to the fact that this happened — a young, black woman through hip-hop culture, a legacy of soul, Spirit and an appreciation for education and educating others communicated love and timeless and necessary messages to the world." Indeed, the Divine works in mysterious and powerful ways across the generations: "the LOVE in the album, the passion, its intention is, to me, undeniable," says Ms. Lauryn Hill. "I think my intention was simply to make something that made my foremothers and forefathers in music and social and political struggle know that someone received what

[123] Brittany Spanos, "Ms. Lauryn Hill Speaks in Depth About Fame, Racism, and 'Miseducation,' rollingstone.com, January 6, 2021, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/lauryn-hill-rare-interview-miseducation-500-greatest-albums-1109491/ (accessed August 3, 2021).

they'd sacrificed to give us, and to let my peers know that we could walk in that truth, proudly and confidently."[124]

Ms. Lauryn Hill points out the degree to which her music and her message was ahead of its time:

> I wrote an album about systemic racism and how it represses and stunts growth and harms (all my albums have probably addressed systemic racism to some degree), before this was something this generation openly talked about. I was called crazy. Now…over a decade later, we hear this as part of the mainstream chorus.

It is this kind of confident public commentary and voice of power that the church so desperately needs to regain if it is to have an impact on younger generations. Christian ministers need to have a Divine eye out for the gaps between what they are saying and who they are serving. I am especially inspired by the way in which Ms. Lauryn Hill channeled her art practice into a quasi-ministerial service that met certain needs that people, including herself, didn't even yet know they needed: "I saw the economic and educational gaps in black communities and although I was super young myself, I used that platform to help bridge those gaps and introduce concepts and information that "we" needed even if "we" didn't know "we" wanted it yet."[125] The foundation of that kind of ministration is Love. She notes: "I always wanted to be a motivation of political change. It's in all my lyrics, that desire to see my community get out of its own way, identify and confront internal and external obstacles, and experience the heights of Love and Self-Love that provoke transformation."[126]

[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

There is no question in my mind that Hip Hop remains relevant as the 21st century unfolds and that it has increasing relevance in educational institutions and academic platforms. In 2013, Harvard University asked rapper Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones, better known as Nas, an American rapper, songwriter and entrepreneur to lend his name to a project by Henry Louis Gates Jr., Harvard's director of the WEB DuBois Research Institute.[127] The fellowship is part of Harvard's Hip Hop Archive and Research Institute whose mission, as reported by *The Guardian Music*, is "to seek projects from scholars and artists that build on the rich and complex hip-hop tradition; to respect that tradition through historically grounded and contextualized critical insights; and most importantly, to represent one's creative and/or intellectually rigorous contribution to hip-hop and the discourse through personal and academic projects."[128] Gates reported that the fellowship came about as the result of a large endowment gift from an anonymous donor, who specifically wanted Nas to be part of the project. Nas, for his part, agreed to the proposal with an overwhelming response, "Hip Hop is important like computer science. The world is changing. If you want to understand the youth, listen to the music. This is what's happening right underneath your nose."[129]

In 2020 Nas won his first Grammy award for his "King Disease" album, and Ms. Lauryn Hill has recently returned to the music scene, linking up with Nas on his August 2021 album, "King's Disease II."[130] Ms. Lauryn Hill and Nas have a complimentary

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[127] Guardian Music, "Nas Introduces His Hip-Hop Fellowship at Harvard University," *theguardian.com*, November 1, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/nov/01/nas-harvard-hip-hop-fellowship (accessed August 7, 2021).

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Mankaprr Conteh, "Ms. Lauryn Hill Makes a Rare Return to Rap, with Power and Perspective, on Nas' 'Nobody,'" *Rolling Stone*, August 6, 2021, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/lauryn-hill-nas-song-review-1208910/ (accessed August 7, 2021).

style of conscious rapping ability that reaches across multiple generations with powerful messages that lay down a musical blueprint for ways to bridge the gap between the sacred and secular communities and bring about real change. Christian leaders must take note of this blueprint and see its transformative and restorative appeal for gathering the Christian faith base of GenX(Hip Hop), GenY(Millennials), GenZ(Zoomer) and GenAlpha together. That kind of gathering around the mic has the power to not only break the ice but to break the bread, bringing these generations into communion together with a collective vision and mission to build a Moral Movement of Love.

In his book, *The Soul of Hip Hop: Rims, Timbs and a Cultural Theology,* Hodge writes that "[Hip hop] allows everyday life, language, and culture to be given fair examination. There is nothing too sacred to talk about or deal with."[131] I agree with Hodge because Hip Hop's many voices consistently bring awareness to problems of injustices, systemic racism, police brutality, and marginalization to recount the past sixty-year-struggle to dismantle structures of human oppression and bring about real change in our society. Morality is a matter of the heart, which lives in the center of the soul and determines whether people will follow the Divine Spirit of God. Proverbs 4:23 encourages, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life."[132] Morality defines human destiny and frames a path in life for one's Faith to experience the truth that the mind must comprehend in the free will decision to choose to do right or wrong. One of the primary purposes of the hip hop movement has been to rap about the

[131] Hodge, D. W. The Soul of Hip Hop: Rims, Timbs and a Cultural Theology. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2010, quoted in Judith Corbett Carter, "Hip Hop Spirituality: Expanding the Tent," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science.* Vol4, No 10(1) August 2014, http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_10_1_August_2014/7.pdf (accessed May 15, 2021).

[132] (Proverbs 4:23 KJV)

reality of life, to refuse silence, and to help collectively bring about change. For fifty years the Hip Hop Movement has been consistent in the ebb and flow of American cultural life, both the mainstream and the underground. It has exhibited artists who are living their lives and imbuing their song with a revolutionary and spiritual purpose. It is worth remembering, as Michael Eric Dyson argues, that "It is a central moral contention of Christianity that God may be disguised in the clothing – and maybe even the rap – of society's most despised members."[133] While many people in mainstream society and in the traditional church tend to judge and dismiss the Hip Hop Movement based on derogatory language usage, that dismissive perspective risks missing the very heart of God's work via the art form of rap music in which artists—*children of God*—express their innermost feelings of both individual and corporate pain.

## V. THE SPIRITUAL & MORAL POWER OF HIP HOP MUSIC

As the life and music of DMX and many other rappers makes plain, there is tremendous spiritual power to this music that is touching the lives of individuals all over the world. To borrow Jon Ivan Gill's phrase again, there is a "theopoetics" at work here.[134] Drawing from the deep well of Black Christianity and the musical roots of this tradition, the spirit of hip hop is alive and responsive to the conditions out of which it is made. This spiritual and moral power needs to be looked at directly, not cast out as though it doesn't belong to the sacred.

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[133] Michael Eric Dyson, *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur.* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2001), 209.

[134] Gill, *Underground Rap as Religion: A Theopoetic Examination of a Process Aesthetic Religion*, 2.

In their article for *The Conversation*, entitled "The Healing Power of Hip Hop, Alexander Crooke and Raphael Travis Jr. write:

> While many people struggle to look past the profanity, materialism, and high-risk messages often celebrated within mainstream rap music, hip hop culture at its core, is built on values of social justice, peace, respect, self-worth, community, and having fun. And because of these values, it's increasingly being used as a therapeutic tool when working with young people.[135]

Travis's research in the United States has yielded findings that demonstrate that Hip Hop listeners find it "a strong source of both self and community empowerment," leading to all sorts of mental health and emotional and personal growth.[136] Similarly, Crooke, looking at Hip Hop in Australia has found it to be "a positive way for students of diverse backgrounds to engage with their wider community, learning tasks, and schools more generally."[137] Both scholars admit that "Hip hop is neither a panacea nor a cure all. It is not perfect, but its promise is undeniable," and they conclude by noting the urgency for greater "equity, justice, tolerance and critical civic engagement in today's society."[138]

In her ethnomusicology article, "Under the Blasphemous W(Rap): Locating the Spirit in Hip-Hop," Christina Zanfagna writes: "My hope is that this paper will take a brick out of the intergenerational wall, and will help reveal, once again, the spiritual worth of black popular music. This revelation is not intended as a spotlight on racial difference, but as a call to acknowledge and honor the spiritual complexity of popular

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[135] Alexander Crooke and Raphael Travis Jr., "The Healing Power of Hip Hop," *theconversation*.com, 27 July, 2017, https://theconversation.com/the-healing-power-of-hip-hop-81556 (accessed May 23, 2021).

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid.

music indelibly labeled as profane.[139] Hip hop, in other words, is a musical *and* spiritual bridge across generational and racial and religious divides.

Some critics in the traditional church may point to the excess displays of sexuality and wealth as an indication of the genre's corruption, or sinfulness. However, Zanfagna argues that this is precisely what makes the music so spiritually authentic:

> For many hip-hoppers, their faith in a higher power is not divorced from their sexuality or the material wealth; they are all "in bed" with each other – in the all-inclusive gumbo of life. Rap music also serves as a public outlet for confession and admission. Outkast raps, "We missed a lot of church so the music is our confessional" (1998). They treat the music as the sacred wooden stall where one confesses their weaknesses and wrongs, and also where one professes their faith, loyalties and love. And what makes the sin a "sin," the wrong a "wrong?" Outkast continues:
>
> > Sin all depends on what you believing in
> > Faith is what you make it, that's the hardest shit since MC Ren
>
> In other words, morality is fluid, contextual, and self-prescribed. Hip-hop artists apply a sense of playfulness to serious subject matter to reach their own spiritual Truth.[140]

In my own research into perspectives on morality, I found that many respondents also locate their sense of morality in "self-prescribed" ways that nevertheless often center on their relationship with God as the guiding light of their personal conscience.[141] "Morality is the boundaries by which I treat people, act around people and when I am alone. It is how God has taught us to love and share," one respondent wrote.[142] Many hip hop artists express a similar sentiment as they rap about social injustices and personal

[139] Christina Zanfagna, "Under The Blasphemous W(Rap): Locating the Spirit In Hip-Hop," *Ethnomusicology Review*, v. 12 (2006), https://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/12/piece/507 (accessed May 24, 2021).

[140] Ibid.

[141] Appendix D, "Morality Questionnaire."

[142] Ibid.

struggles and victories. Those who turn their back on this musical culture due to certain perceived sins miss the greater spiritual power at work.

**Research Question #3**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Given the ongoing debate over the connection between religion and morality and, specifically, the millennial generation's (lack of) adherence to a religious morality, Research Question #3 asks how do ministerial leaders epitomize Biblical lessons that inspire and enable Millennials to fully embrace the spirit of faith and religion in this postmodern era? How will the gap between the sacred and the secular be bridged with a hermeneutical lens of interpretation, understanding and methodical approach of scripture without compromising the Gospel message? Further, as pastors, how do we bridge the gap between the rap culture and the black church?

This section will offer an overview of the traditional church and its relationship to Millennials. I will then articulate a set of practices that can begin to bridge the gap. First, I will argue for expanding and refocusing the lens by which Christian ministers perceive and mentor those in the Millennial generation. Secondly, I will explore the spiritual power of Hip Hop music to bridge this gap. I will make this case by developing a "Hip Hop hermeneutic" that establishes links between "secular" music and scripture. Finally, as a matter of practical theology, I will explain how this way of thinking might shape

both this content and delivery for use in non-parish settings, with particular attention to my own ministerial setting—Cafe Word.

## I. EXPANDING & REFOCUSING THE LENS: A NEW MISSIONAL MOVEMENT

Through my ministry and throughout this research project, I propose the power of sacred and secular music to bridge generational divides and further the mission of God. Music is the message of Love that joins souls in worship and dance, both the sacred and secular genres. How will we examine the Bible with a new lens, a "new wineskin"? We are despartely in need of new methods that can be put in place to shed a different light—a "new wine"—that supports the good of all things. Millennials seek the unknown daily in their virtual travels on social media, discovering the unimaginable, and they find it. We must journey with them fearlessly, not to lose, rather to make an incredible discovery that leaves a mark, stones in the Jordan, to remember that we once crossed over with the guidance of Abba Father.

Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann is by far one of the most influential visionaries who has labored in the deep realm of inquiry of the prophetic imagination for over forty years. His theological and ethical wisdom and knowledge of the Hebrew Bible gives him a vision of the spiritual gift of prophecy and its relationship to the imagination required to lead God's people. In Brueggemann's book *The Prophetic Imagination*, Davis Hankins explains the various roles that imagination plays in the biblical text, through interpretation and in communal practices. He points out that Brueggemann's work on the

imagination, for example, participates in larger developments in literary criticism, philosophy, and other fields."[143] Hankins goes further to say, "*The Prophetic Imagination* never treats biblical text as mere vehicles for policy position or cultural critique and God is not defined by doctrines or wedded to social institutions by regularly surprising the human community with new meanings, unforeseen possibilities, and unconscious truths that the prophets voice in God's name."[144] According to Brueggemann, "a prophetic ministry consists of offering an alternative perception of reality and in letting people see their own history in light of God's freedom and His will for justice as well as it evokes an alternative community that knows it is about different things in different ways."[145]

This dissertation project proposes a new urban ministry for the 21st century. The church might say "all are welcome" or "come as you are," but in essence they only accept you if you come as they are. How do we reform this community to make it a welcoming place for all? How do we help young people, to use Brueggemann's words again, "see their own history in light of God's freedom and His will for justice?" In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom,* bell hooks warns us of the dangers of being inflexible when it comes to teaching. She writes "To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin."[146] She challenges us to reach our "congregants" where they are in their journey rather than bring them to us, we should go to them.

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[143] Davis Hankins, "Foreword," *The Prophetic Imagination*, *40th Anniversary Edition,* Walter Brueggemann (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018), xiv.

[144] Ibid., xviii.

[145] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, *40th Anniversary Edition,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018), 116-117.

[146] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.

I agree with hooks that meeting our congregants where they are will create a new platform. More importantly, as we come to the table of brotherly and sisterly love, we must prepare ourselves to have a listening ear with patience and genuine concern for engaging in conversation. Millennials have a need to feel free to express what they perceive and understand from their own personal lens without judgement. Building personal and community relationships between church leaders and Millennials hinges on providing a safe place of belonging. The Millennial generation is full of visionaries who have been called by God for such a time as this to live lives full to overflowing with Divine purpose. The misfortunes, injustices, and crises of our larger society, as well as the misrepresentation and rejections of the church, have forced many Millennials to find their own path to engage in spiritual fellowship. And I am increasingly convinced that this fellowship, which exists well outside the bounds of traditional church, is where God is most at work.

## II. RETHINKING THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS: HANDING OVER THE MICROPHONE

This new missional movement, three decades into the twenty-first century, calls for a major re-thinking of the generational hierarchies that are constraining the witness of the church. We need Christian elders who are open-hearted enough to desire not only to sit with and learn from the younger generation but to "hand over the microphone," so to speak. We need open-hearted leaders, like Dr. Vincent Harding was.

In his Veterans of Hope Retreat, Dr. Harding posed a question to a twenty-three year old woman in the group, asking her what she would say as a representative of Hip Hop culture to the local black church if sincere deacons and preachers approached her asking her to teach them "What is it that the hip hop generation is trying to say to us? What are we to learn from their experience?" [147] Her response was that the Hip Hop generation is a movement and that rap is a genre within that movement. Another participant at that retreat reminded her about the Black poets of a generation like Nikki Giovanni and Sonia Sanchez whose voices spoke for a generation before rap came into focus. The young woman responded that a lot of rap music, the authentic, underground voices of the young people, are often silenced by the major record labels who are afraid that these records will not make money. These underground rappers, "conscious rap," is the true voice of rap. She further stated that the "black church had become 'de-radicalized'" in her experience compared to the black church in the 1960s, which had a voice and social power. "The current church," she argues, "is overly concerned with individual salvation rather than the salvation of the community." She believes that the underground rap artists are Hip Hop theologians, equipping her in a way that the academy does not.

In his book, *Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship*, Thomas G. Long observes that "effective worship involves more than plodding dutifully through of a series of prayers and hymns and recitations. Worship involves word and gesture, movement and narration, in a highly active and participatory reenactment of the

[147] Vincent Harding, Veterans of Hope Retreat, http://www.veteransofhope.org/about-us/.

Gospel story and, as such, it is inherently dramatic."[148] I am convinced that the vision and the lens of the Black Church must be expanded and refocused—it's mission must be redefined. The method in which the church approaches the future of the next generation must start in this present time. Leaders who have been doing it their own way must now come together on common ground, shaping a revised vision that perceives all the ways in which God is working in and through the wider culture. This is a corporate call, a rallying cry for a missional movement to meet the culture right where they are and listen to how they have come to the understanding of who God is and how they respond to His Spirit. The leaders of the Black Church must apologize for rejecting and criticizing the cultural phenomenon and identity that Hip Hop culture has created and lives by. In other words, the church needs to ask for forgiveness. Hip Hop is the sound of joy and desperation. It offers a great reexamination of this country, where liberty and justice continue to evade. This revolution is not being televised; it is being rapped. And an urban ministry heading towards the middle of the twenty-first century must take note and feel the beat.

In his book, *Rise Up: Confronting a Country at the Crossroads*, Reverend Al Sharpton tells the story of meeting Michael Jordan and listening to him comment on the tremendous basketball skills of a young high schooler named Lebron James. "Only someone who's achieved certain success in their field can see the qualities in the next generation that will catapult them to real standing," Sharpton writes. "I see this in my world of activism, too, where I'm continually scouting for the next generation of leaders and organizers, agitators and tree-shakers who will move us forward."[149] He maintains

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[148] Thomas G. Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 43.

[149] Al Sharpton, *Rise Up: Confronting a Country at the Crossroads*, (New York: Hanover Square Press, 2020), 248.

that these two generations of activists—the older Civil Rights era leaders and today's youth activists—"can all sit at the same table to discuss our shared objectives."[150] He also acknowledges that since "it's wise to compare notes," "the old school and the new school should be in dialogue with one another."[151] My own dissertation project, and these research questions specifically, have been arguing the exact same thing.

Sharpton notes that "the next generation of up-and-coming leaders have a more inclusive worldview, especially with regards to the fluidity of gender identities, and this is a strength."[152] He is not confined by the boundaries of his own generational thinking—he is looking outwards at the youth coming up behind him, and he is inspired. He writes, "Leadership comes in all forms—gay, Black, white, trans, Latino, you name it—and it's a benefit to the youth of today that they can both recognize and mobilize a diversity of people in the name of a common goal or initiative. We need more of this kind of thinking in all areas of activism."[153]

I take inspiration from Sharpton's life and, especially, the way he is living out his older years, eager to look to the younger generation as partners in the spiritual work of social justice. He admits, "I may be a member of the old guard, but I'm looking at the generations nipping at my heels. I'm counting on them to grab a hold of the reins and transform the next iteration of social justice into a human rights movement for every gender, sexual orientation, color, and religion." I see my own work and ministry in a very similar light. I have been charged to continue to minister and lead through Cafe Word,

[150] Ibid. 247.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., 175.
[153] Ibid.

but I am eager to do so with the young people of my community bringing their unique stamp of ideas, cultures, and spirituality all of our endeavors together.

## III. DEVELOPING A "HIP HOP HERMENEUTIC": LINKING THE SECULAR AND THE SCRIPTURAL

Of course, it is incumbent upon all Christian leaders to ensure that their methods of ministry and approaches of outreach are Biblically-based. In this section I will ground my spiritual ministry in several key texts from the Old and New Testaments and by referring to a number of key interpreters.

First, and most obviously, is the story recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels of Jesus breaking bread with the sinners and social outcasts of his day. The story goes as follows:

> And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples. Why on earth is your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.[154]

This passage of scripture depicts a scene of the sacred and secular gathering in the presence of God; it supports the argument that barriers must be dismantled to save the lost souls. It is clear from this passage that Jesus's ministry was an inclusive one. The social rejects of his time were invited to his table, and he was invited to theirs. Jesus did not come to serve the religious leaders; he came to serve the sick and the vulnerable, the dispossessed and the disrespected. He went into the marketplace and spent his time there

[154] (Matthew 9:10-13 KJV)

in ministry and service, rather than in the religious houses of worship. We, like Jesus, need to come to the marketplace, not run from it.

In Mark 2:22, Jesus said, "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles."[155] It is important to point out that Hip Hop is not simply the bottle or the wineskin; it is the wine. As I argued in Research Question 2 above, Hip Hop is often channeling the Holy Spirit and is conveying authentic voices, if we only have ears to hear and eyes to see. There is spiritual power and life flowing through that subculture, and it needs new wineskins to carry it. This is to say that the traditional church is the institution that most needs to change rather than Hip Hop culture bending to the will of the church, which it will not do anyway. We must come together and sit down at the table of brotherly and sisterly Love and reason together on issues.

The Black church and Christian religious leaders around the world are often guided by their vision of the end time, which I too believe will no doubt happen; however, the "Sovereignty of God is the Christian teaching that God is the supreme authority and all things are under His control." Easton's Bible Dictionary defines God's Sovereignty as His "absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure."[156] God has supreme authority and absolute power over all things. God is not obligated to reveal how he chooses to act. And yes, God is very much active, despite our perplexity. Scripture says, "God works all things according to the counsel of his will."[157]

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[155] (Mark 2:22 KJV)

[156] Easton's Bible Dictionary, "Sovereignty," https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/eastons-bible-dictionary/sovereignty.html (accessed March 15, 2021).

[157] (Ephesians 1:11 KJV)

This is the Word. In the meantime, how God is preparing his chosen leaders to introduce humanity to salvation to be ready for his entrance may be peculiar. As it says in Deuteronomy 14:2 "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."[158] And 1 Peter 2:9 reads "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."[159]

God is a peculiar God, and he uses peculiar means to reach his peculiar people. Unfortunately, the mainstream and traditional churches have attempted to throw the stones of judgement at youth and Hip Hop cultures due to surface-level concerns, like vulgar language and such. But 1 Timothy 4:12 reminds us: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in work, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in purity."[160] Fifty years ago a generation of prophets, a new peculiar people, were born into the world. Just as Jesus came into the world in an animal barn, dressed in swaddling clothes, so too did the Hip Hop messiahs show up in unexpected clothing, speaking in a tongue that the Black Church and much of the world could not understand nor comprehend at first.

In the opening of his article, "'Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So:' Viewing Rap Music as a Form of African-American Spirituality," Darrell James Wesley argues that the essence of spirituality is "creating ways to condition the spirit to overcome and

[158] (Deuteronomy 14:2 KJV)
[159] (1 Peter 2:9 KJV)
[160] (1 Timothy 4:12 KJV)

transcend painful forces that interrupt well-being and quality of life."[161] This becomes the basis for his argument that rap music is an expression of Black spirituality. He writes:

> In Psalm 107, there is the joyous celebration of return from exile and isolation as pilgrims returning from exile collectively acknowledge their gratitude for deliverance from oppressive realities…. Like those pilgrims in Psalm 107, African-Americans can speak of isolation, exile, marginalization, poverty, imprisonment, and so forth.

In other words, the voices of rappers and Hip Hop artists might be seen, in light of Psalm 107, as the prophetic voices of God's chosen people.

In the interview with Pastor Efrem Smith, author of *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture*, which I cited above, the interviewer asked him how he defines Hip Hop theology. Smith responds by saying, "Hip-Hop Theology is the intersection of a relevant liberation and reconciliation theology for the emerging urban generation. To a degree, it's a contextualized postmodern theology that still believes in the necessity of new birth and the authority of Scripture." According to Smith:

> Hip-Hop Theology is based on a biblical foundation of Acts 17. It is about engaging hip-hop culture for kingdom purposes. Instead of demonizing the culture, it's about using hip-hop's original elements (the deejay, the break dancer, graffiti art, and the emcee) and its original positive principles (peace, unity, love, community, and having fun) to present the good news of the Gospel. Hip-hop theology is also believing that God calls Christians to love and to be in authentic relationship with the marginalized.[162]

The traditional church is indeed facing the challenges of a new generational reformation as they are asked to embrace the nature of the Hip Hop culture and not judge the content

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[161] Darrell James Wesley, "Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So: Viewing Rap Music as a Form of African-American Spirituality," in *Urban God Talk: Constructing a Hip Hop Spirituality*, ed. Andre E. Johnson, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 67.

[162] Robert Gelinas, "Bringing Hip-Hop to Church," *urbanfaith.com*, March 2009, https://urbanfaith.com/2009/03/bringing-hip-hop-to-church.html/ (accessed May 15, 2021).

of their character in worship. As Paul A. Basden discerns in the introduction to *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: 6 Views*, "It has ever been the case that worship is multiform, not uniform. God is not threatened by this reality—he ordained it; he expects it; he glories in it. As followers of him who said, 'God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24), we should celebrate every honest attempt to express love and devotion to God."[163]

According to Price, "Rap/Hip Hop expressions have been inclusive of belief statements, faith tenets, and theological frameworks through the brief history of Hip Hop Culture, yet many in the Black Church have not felt comfortable with the new methods, modes, and manners of expressions."[164] This is particularly so for Black Protestant Millennials, a subset of the generation. According to Keith A. Puffer, in his article, *Protestant Millennials, Religious Doubt, and the Local Church*, the "unwise responses by local church leaders to the doubting habits of these young parishioners is a significant reason for their departure."[165] The parallel findings help explain, at least in part, the deep-rooted, five decades of resistance to Hip Hop from the Black Church and the religious community at-large. What is so very disturbing is that the important issues of individual and collective freedom from racial injustice—the core issues that they agree upon—are real and relevant and require immediate ongoing conversations. Price states, "Although Hip Hop Culture in the twenty-first century is different from its infant state in the late 1960s and early 1970s, its urgent cries, moans, groans, and hollers remain consistently

[163] Paul A. Basden, *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: 6 Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 19

[164] Price, *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture*, xv.

[165] Keith A. Puffer, "Protestant Millennials, Religious Doubt, and the Local Church," *Religions* 9, no.1 (2018), 1.

focused on the same survival, liberation, and equality that the Black Church has fought for over the generations."[166] He goes further to say, "although the Hip Hop modus operandi is dramatically and drastically different, perhaps even polemic, Hip Hop and the Black Church are essentially fighting for the same thing and that is what makes this question of the dilemma of the generational divide and the initial and subsequent disengagement of the Black Church so intellectually perplexing."[167]

We must not let cultural and generational differences get in the way of the work of Christ. What we need, instead, is to be guided by the way of love. "When the way of love becomes one's way of life," writes Bishop Michael Curry in *Love Is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*, "it's a game changer. It shapes every decision we make—and that changes everything, whether you're a preacher or a politician, a communist or a corporate executive, a teacher or a trash collector. And it cannot be limited to just the personal. Once it's your spiritual center of gravity, it floods every aspect and dimension of life."[168]

## IV. USING HIP HOP AS CONTENT AND DELIVERY IN NON-PARISH SETTINGS

The authenticity of much Hip Hop music lends itself to use in both worship services and non-parish settings. Thomas G. Long notes in *Beyond the Worship Wars* how "Every congregation has the opportunity to think through the dramatic narrative of its service of worship and to ask at each point along the way, 'Is there a way to allow the

[166] Price, *The Black Church and Hip Hop Culture*, xv.
[167] Ibid., xv.
[168] Michael Curry, *Love Is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times,* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020), 230.

inherent drama in this scene to be more fully visible, to be more completely clear in its meaning, and to be more inviting to participation?' The results will be a worship full of action, an event of Gospel community theater generating excitement and summoning people out of their seats and onto center stage."[169]

I believe that the church and rap communities can come together to provide social liberation. The power of the church to transform the community can combine with the power and culture of Hip Hop to make change in the community. If the church is to help the marginalized in society, we must address and hear the message of pain coming out of the wider community instead of judging their behavior, specifically the language they use in expressing this need. We need to hear the cry of the wounded and oppressed. Or is the church going to remain silent as it did over 20 years ago when AIDS first appeared in the news? In fact, racial justice is bound up with LGBTQ rights. Al Sharpton writes, "The way I see it, I cannot in good faith preach civil rights for one group of people yet deny those same rights for another group…. The Black community can't ignore the injustices faced by our Latino neighbors or the LGBTQ community at the risk of only fighting our own battles.[170] The LGBTQ community is near and dear to my heart since I have lived with and socialized with close friends and family who are gay. They taught me how to love them as peculiar human beings. We are all peculiar people in need of our peculiar God.

My focus for the pastoral leadership I believe God has called me to perform at this time is anchored in four immediate areas of ministry, the office of preacher, evangelist, prophetic voice, and bridge-builder. Being a bridge-builder is my most

[169] Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars,* 52
[170] Al Sharpton, *Rise Up*, 184-185.

challenging office of the ministry at this juncture, which involves mediating between the sacred and secular. The gap here is by no means as wide as it once was, given that some mega-churches have already started to merge Holy Hip Hop into their traditional congregations and services. Therefore, this is a window of opportunity for building relationships between the Hip Hop generation at-large and Holy Hip Hoppers who have already turned their lives over to Christ. This is a mutual point of collaboration. The growth and success of such a model could be the agent that would lead to other creative ways of understanding how to close the gap.

On a more immediate note, Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson in their book *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture,* write, "within the culture there are philosophers. If the church wants to engage hip-hop culture, not just be provoked in spirit by its idolatrous negative side, it must build bridges with the culture so that theologians, church members and hip-hop philosophers might reason together."[171] Familiarity between the church and the culture breads power, and I believe God is looking to empower, transform and bless the unity of our next generation within the church. According to Pastor Smith, "Hip-Hop has to be more than a Sunday worship experience; it has to be a part of a larger congregational vision of evangelism, discipleship, and missions. Hip-Hop is about a generation of young people."[172]

At Cafe Word, this kind of worship service takes on its own impromptu life at the gathering of two or more participants. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, participants gathered regularly on Sunday for a one-hour Word of Worship (WOW) service and

[171] Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson, *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 52.

[172] Robert Gelinas, "Bringing Hip-Hop to Church," *urbanfaith.com*, March 2009, https://urbanfaith.com/2009/03/bringing-hip-hop-to-church.html/ (accessed May 15, 2021).

midweek Bible Study; however, any ordinary visit to the store can possibly turn into a Bible Study. Music is the driving catalyst for this form of worship since it sets the atmosphere in the store. The images of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls, for example, grace the ambience of Cafe Word, by way of their art as well as their music. I think of these two legendary grassroots, conscious rappers as the original prophets of Hip Hop spirituality, and their presence in the store generates connection and conversation with many of the people who walk into the store and into my ministry.

Cafe Word has been a part of any significant events in the village. The ministry has been actively involved, for example, in the Black Lives Matter movement of New Jersey, including participating in key marches and protests in South Orange.

In 2015, South Orange Village was dubbed the Live Music Capital of North Jersey, and it is consistently promoting all business venues to play continuous music inside and outside of the store, presenting a vintage vibe as customers stroll through the Village to dine and shop. During the spring, summer, and fall Sidewalk Sales, live music is played outside of Cafe Word on demand as well a part of seasonal music events hosted by the South Orange Village Alliance (SOVA). There is, in other words, great potential for leveraging the music culture of South Orange with the particular spirituality of Hip Hop in the context of the ministry and community events hosted by Cafe Word.[173]

## V. BRIDGING THE GAP: REACHING YOUNGER GENERATIONS

[173] See Appendix B – The Setting: Cafe Word for a description of the store and business plan along with photographs and recent event posters.

Bridging the gap between the faith-based Christian community and the Generation X, Y and Z communities is a revolutionary process. I refer to this as the tension between Sacred and Secular—sacred/secular within the Christian community and sacred/secular within the unchurched Gen X, Y and Z community. God has begun to transform holy leaders to take on the awesome task of going to war for God to save an entire generation. This is a generation of youth and young adults whose equal rights to the Kingdom of God have been threatened by the insults and reprimands of traditional church doctrine, which refuses to embrace these subcultures due to a perception about demoralizing behavior. The traditional church's refusal to embrace this population has now resulted in a delay in the church's effort to seek new and innovative ways to feed the spiritual souls of this generation. Is it any wonder, then, why 4.3 million Millennials claim to be unaffiliated with any religion?

Life is not meaningless for Millennials or future generations, regardless of the ongoing struggle to claim one's God-given right to freedom. As faith leaders, we must protect and guard against moral nihilistic attitudes showing up in the form of depression and mental illness and increased rates of suicide, which younger generations are now facing. According to *Business Insider,* "Suicide has increased among Millennials but the data suggest Gen Z the emerging generation, might be most at risk for mental illness."[174] This report goes further to say that in 2017 suicide was the second-leading cause of death for people aged 10-24 (Gen Z) and it's a worse epidemic than anything Millennials faced at the age. The journalists write:

[174] Andy Kiersz and Allana Akhtar, "Suicide is Gen Z's Second-Leading Cause of Death, and It's a Worse Epidemic than Anything Millennials Faced at that Age," *Business Insider*, Oct. 17, 2019, https://www.businessinsider.com/cdc-teenage-gen-z-american-suicide-epidemic (accessed June 15, 2021).

> Millennials (or people who turned 23 to 38 in 2019) have seen a 47% increase in major-depression diagnosis. "Deaths of despair," or dying from suicide, alcohol, and drugs, increased in Millennials population in the last 10 years, and they are more likely to report feeling lonely than other generations." For Gen Z, the mental illness crisis continues. In 2017, 13% of teens reported having experienced at least one major depressive episode in the past year, Pew Research Center reported. In 2007, when Millennials were teens, that number was just 8%.[175]

The problem is very likely exacerbated (if not caused by) social media. The Pew Research Center found 45% of teens aged 13 to 17 said they use the internet "almost constantly," stating that "Over-use of social media can cause loneliness, depression, and anxiety, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America reported."[176] The younger generations are longing for better interpersonal connection and meaningful engagement with other human beings and the environment around them.

Currently, the church is wrestling with how to embrace the culture of Generations X, Y and Z, welcoming them into the Christian church community without, supposedly, compromising the Gospel message. A prerequisite for bringing this community into the church is the first step to meeting them where they are and seeking to understand them by listening to and studying their music and the culture. In other words, the church has to follow the practice of Jesus and sit with them on their terms to gain greater knowledge of their world. Above, I argued that Jesus demonstrated this key ministerial practice when he sat with the tax collectors and other sinners, ignoring the religious leader's judgments and abuse. A major commission that the church has been given is how to authentically engage this culture in agape love and welcome them into the church as not simply converts but as disciples and emerging leaders.

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[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.

As my Millennial disciples' spiritual development undergoes the stages of disciple formation, I seek to align both the social consciousness of the rappers of Generations X,Y and Z with the focus on the holy and saved by explicitly Christian rap and Hip Hop artists (who are also known as "Holy Hip Hoppers"). This allows each individual person to have a platform within God's vineyard to establish a new level of musical praise and worship. It has been my experience with the Generations X, Y, and Z culture that, as much as they might not want to identify with the church language, they have some general knowledge base. It is at this base where I begin to dialogue with them, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I have in most instances been successful in creating a space to evangelize, and I attribute this to my high energy and knowledge of their music. I would be remiss not to mention the many times I have walked away feeling so disconnected because I have not spent enough quality time with them. I am learning that I must at all times carry in my heart and mind a sermonette of substance with some social relevance laced in story, metaphor, or simile. Every time I step into this position, I will draw from my prayer resources and remember, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."[177]

At Cafe Word, God's transforming Spirit will embrace Gen X, Y, and Z with such love and wonder that the world will not be able to recognize the new creatures in Christ who will appear. Surely it will be a supernatural experience that only an incredible God can perform. However, the real journey with this culture is to lead them spiritually and socially, cultivating authentic relationships that seek to respect their differences and identify with their struggle. Cafe Word Bookstore is the non-parish setting for my

[177] (James 5:16, KJV)

demonstration project, and it offers a twofold experience, a secular-and-sacred item shopping experience as well as a spiritual experience depending on the conversations and the unpredictable, mighty movements of the Holy Spirit. Many participants have shared that they felt a spiritual pulling before entering into the store after viewing the window setting. Some have told me it was unexplainable.

What is needed today is *an urban ministry for the 21st century*—a transcending revolutionary compromise of traditional church practices and protocols into a new partnering of shared ideas with the Millennial generation and those coming up below them, to reach the common goal of liberation. This goal is also the quest for liberation and freedom from centuries of the physical and mental oppression of the marginalized and the disinherited. Howard Thurman, known as the Black prophet-mystic, whose profound work, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (first published in 1949), has been cited as a significant influence on the shape and direction of the Civil Rights movement. His book takes a distinctive look at God's work in the lives of humans and parallels it with the life of Jesus or the 'religion of Jesus.' The same issues of systemic racism, poverty, police brutality and spiritual disengagement that we presently struggle with have made its way through decades of history bearing the same characteristics. Thurman writes, "too often the weight of the Christian movement has been on the side of the strong and the powerful and against the weak and oppressed—this, despite the gospel."[178] According to Dr. Vincent Harding, Thurman describes the marginalized and disinherited as those "who have their backs up against the wall," and he writes that Thurman "argues that within

[178] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), (Beacon Press: Boston, 1996).

Jesus' suffering, pain, and overwhelming love is the solution that will prevent our descent into moral nihilism."[179]

The misrepresentation of the weak and oppressed by traditional elements in the Christian church has contributed to great suffering and pain and lack of love. Instead, the church should be offering them a place a refuge and a place of belonging to experience interpersonal communication of the saints to guide and walk with them on the journey. As Christians, we must continually ask ourselves, where is the *Love* that was shed for us way back on Calvary?

At the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle in 2018, Bishop Michael Curry opened with a powerful quotation from a 1957 sermon that Dr. Martin Luther King delivered in Montgomery, Alabama on the eve of the bus boycott. King stated that "We must discover the power of love, the power, the redemptive power of love. And when we discover that, we will be able to make this old world a new world. We will be able to make men better. Love is the only way."[180] All else is null and void—Love is the only way, the radical counter-way.

In 2005, Dr. Vincent Harding, along with two other Elders, Rev. John Wingate of the A.M.E. church and Rev. Ted Faison of the Baptist church, charged Cafe Word Ministries to go forward and join the ranks of those willing to stand in the gap, reaching out to the lost and future generations, guarding them and helping them to fulfill their Divine destiny. I have endeavored to do this ever since.

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[179] Vincent Harding, "Forward," *Jesus and the Disinherited*, (Beacon Press: Boston, 1996), viii and back cover.

[180] Lily Rothman, "Bishop Michael Curry's Royal Wedding Sermon Included a Martin Luther King Jr. Quote. Here's Its Surprising Political Message," *Time.*com, May 24, 2018, https://time.com/5283768/michael-curry-royal-wedding-martin-luther-king/ (accessed June 18, 2021).

Now, my urgent question is how do we get the church prepared to move into a season of transition? The research questions and the analysis presented throughout this chapter indicates that this is very much a process that is contingent on the church's leadership and lay parishioners' willingness to come out from behind their church doors and step into the Marketplace to engage in relevant, restorative, impactful fellowship with GenX (Hip Hop), GenY (Millennials), GenZ (Zoomers) and GenAlpha (the newest generation) to learn from them of the ways that God has spoken to them, gifted them, and ordained them. Writing in *Love is the Way*, Bishop Michael Curry states, "but the further Christianity has strayed from its roots in Jesus of Nazareth – his teachings, his example, and the reality of his risen life – the more we have betrayed the one we claim to follow. The more we have remained silent or committed evils that have hurt and harmed God's creations."[181] The church must move from mission-mindedness and service volunteerism to become true community partners with the culture around them. My ministry formation in the marketplace is just one brick to be placed on the foundation in the continued struggle to secure the building of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

[181] Michael Curry, *Love Is the Way,* 229.

# CHAPTER 5
# EVALUATION PROCESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

## THE WORD Text Message Ministry

Originally, I planned to host Friday Night@The Mic, an event that would be followed by open dialogue, after which I would ask participants to evaluate their experience. However, this research goal had to be changed, due to COVID-19. Instead, I have created THE WORD as a text message ministry to remain in contact with my Cafe Word disciples throughout the pandemic. THE WORD consists of a prophetic message that is given to me early on Sunday mornings after several hours of prayer and meditation. This has become a prophetic word that speaks through the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs and assuage the anxieties of those who read it.

THE WORD initially went out to 25 recipients, but that has now expanded to over two hundred weekly recipients in a year. Some of these people have been reposting THE WORD messages to their own social media feeds, like Instagram and Facebook, which has significantly expanded its reach. For example, my Bishop, Aran McClary, has been reposting THE WORD to his 5,000 followers on Facebook, and another of my disciples, Peter Quillin, a professional boxer, has been sharing the message with his 1,000,000 followers.

My observation protocol was guided by my role as an "involved participant observer" and by the Holy Spirit in the writing of each one of THE WORD messages. As one of the research participants, I measured this plan of implementation through qualitative means of testimonials and observation.[182] My evaluation of the effectiveness of THE WORD messages came to me through conversations via text message responses each week as well as one-on-one conversations and in-person visits that occurred at the Cafe Word Bookstore and in the marketplace of the Village of South Orange.

For example, one recipient said that her relationship with God had strengthened over the course of receiving THE WORD: "The Word was uplifting and encouraging at times when I felt doubtful, or uncertain, it reminded me that God has a plan that is bigger than what we think, so lean not on your own understanding and to always trust God even through the most challenging times."

Another surveyed recipient wrote that "It has strengthen my relationship with God being able to hear His Word when I am unable to read the Bible." One distinct advantage that this ministry offers, I have now realized, is that it arrives in people's pockets wherever they are, regardless of whether they are able to (or want to) attend a place of worship. In some instances, there are some who wanted to attend a place of worship on Sundays but were also desired to receive THE WORD message as well. Every person surveyed about THE WORD, and from anecdotal evidence I collected from conversations and text feedback, the Cafe Word Disciples who receive THE WORD each week would like for it to continue as a text message service. They like the weekly contact and are already overtaxed on their various social media platforms. In other words, my use of text

[182] See Appendix D Questionnaire for "The Word" Text Message

messaging is more impactful to others at the moment than my limited use of Instagram or Facebook, and this realization is helping guide my ministry going forward.

Regarding the consistency of THE WORD arriving each week, another surveyed recipient responded by saying, "THE WORD also helped me maintain a sense of normalcy and expectancy as I know it's always going to come every Sunday and it's something that just helps me keep track of the time in the current state."[183] Another advantage to this ministry is that no matter where I am, even if I am travelling, I could continue to send out THE WORD message to my Cafe Word disciples and receive their responses. This work kept me in close contact with everyone even though I wasn't at the store each week, especially through the pandemic shutdowns. Truthfully, THE WORD has expanded my ministry well beyond what the space of this vineyard, Cafe Word, can handle in 400 square feet, which only allows 20 people by local fire code.

As a result of what I have learned over the past year and a half of ministering to people through the pandemic via THE WORD, I have resolved to continue sending these messages out each week and to continue building my ministry around individual contact, one new son or daughter at a time.

**The Morality Questionnaire**

With the assistance of my Site Team, I developed an evaluation process to better understand various people's perspectives on morality and God. The Morality Survey was designed as a simple questionnaire to pose to a range of individuals from different age demographics. The survey was administered in 2020 and was sent out by text message

[183] Ibid.

and email. Thirty-six responses were received. Each respondent was given an anonymous code number and their responses organized for analysis.[184]

Most of my respondents defined morality as just or ethical relations between other human beings, which many people defined as knowing or sensing what is right or wrong. One respondent, for example, said that morality is "someone who cares about others," while another person wrote that "Morality is your emotional compass that gauges when you've gone too far or not far enough. Morality defines hard boundaries." One telling response from a Millennial expressed a sense of love and a desire to not cause harm: "I define morality as conducting yourself in a way of love, a way that causes no harm to anyone else."

Most of the respondents named God as a defining aspect in their determination of what is morally right and morally wrong, and many acknowledged that this God connection was owing to "my upbringing and my spiritual life" or that "my upbringing and Christian beliefs have determined my sense of morality."

There was disagreement, however, about Question 5, "Do you think others should use God to determine their morality? Some respondents believed that God and scripture were essential to developing a strong sense of morality. "Yes," wrote one respondent, "because we are all God's creation and only He has the right to determine right and wrong for His people." Another wrote "I believe the bible is a blueprint for life so yes, I think others should use God to determine their morality."

Others were concerned about the matter of compulsion, if a belief in God is required for moral living: "When we do this, it almost "forces" God on people instead of

[184] See Appendix D – Morality Questionnaire and Responses for the full survey data

allowing them to choose God. If I do what God put me here to do, I'll lead way more people to follow His guidelines rather than telling them "God said this is right and wrong!"

Still others sat between these two sides of the debate, finding balance between a focus on God and Scripture and a more relativistic sense that morality is whatever we determine for themselves. One wrote, "Your spirituality brings a better sense to your humanity for the better. Your morality and your spirituality should be in a marriage."

I wrote in Chapter 4 that many Millennials have left the church, which the Pew Research Center and other researchers understand to mean a declining sense of religious faith or practice in America. But my survey respondents reflect a deeply spiritual sense of morality and innate belief in what is right or wrong. Taken all together, the responses from the Morality Survey demonstrate, for me, an abiding sense of spiritual interest and engagement with morality and God and the work of justice. Regardless of what some people in the church might say about Hip Hop culture or the "sinfulness" of the world, among my survey respondents, I found an abiding interest in following God and allowing one's life to be guided by a deeply purposeful sense of morality.

I find strong lines of connection between what my survey respondents wrote and what I read in the work of Dr. King and Bruggeman, Sharpton and Curry. It is clear to me that a civil rights movement coupled with a moral movement of Love is the way forward for the rest of the 21st century. And this is precisely what the Hip Hop movement can bring to the church.

**Podcast Development**

Originally, I had planned to create a podcast in the course of the dissertation project. The pandemic prevented this from happening, but as the Divine would orchestrate, I was invited by my lead Site Team Member, Peuge Benjamin, the IT expert for the demonstration project, to participate on his podcast, "Getting My Cheese (Back) On My Cracker," which he directs and co-hosts, along with Ashley Curry. The podcast was created by two Millennials who took an active approach to addressing different aspects of mental health as well as exploring collective ways to address "healing our community's generational curses." I served as one the two guest ministers on the third and final segment of the podcast series "Pray It Away, Religion and Mental Health in the Black Community."[185]

Regarding the mental health of Black Americans, Curry and Benjamin believe that there is some cause for concern, but they don't believe people or mental health professionals take the immediate and substantial real-time action that is needed. As such, the hosts took the initiative and began an active approach to address different aspects of mental health by listening to the views of a Baby Boomer Minister and Millennial Minister on how to approach mental health from a religious perspective. In Chapter 4, Research Question #1, I cited astounding statistics on the suicide rate of Gen Z (Zoomers), the emerging generation, and how significantly the numbers have increased from those of the Millennial generation when they were the same age. The findings were directly related to mental illness and depression. This is a real-time problem today that appears to be a direct demonic attack on future generations.

[185] Ashley Curry and Peuge Benjamin, "Pray it Away, Religion and Mental Health in the Black Community, pt. 3," *Getting My Cheese (Back) on My Cracker*, November 18, 2020. Video footage available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=504472063844845

The focus of "Pray it Away, Religion and Mental Health in the Black Community, pt. 3" was on the importance of prayer. I was asked to participate in the planning for the final segment to help brainstorm some ideas. They struggled with what actions to take for their mental health while waiting for prayers to be answered. I suggested that they use some of my research questions to guide them in a direction that would set the atmosphere for addressing practical questions and at the same time open a wider spiritual lens for best practices to support them as they continued to live out their purpose. I could see plainly that they needed wisdom of the elders to support them in their spiritual growth and help strengthen and sustain them during the process of waiting for healing. This observation made me think of Bishop Michael Curry's line that "To live into our faith and values, we need to bring intentionality and purpose to our everyday—and that's where a rule of life comes in to support us."[186]

The Millennials I spoke with on the podcast all wanted prayer to produce results, but you have to develop a prayer life. It is like a workout—you must do it often and it must be a part of your daily life. I think about prayer much like Dr. King wrote in *Strength to Love*, when he said "I am certain we need to pray for God's help and guidance in this integration struggle, but we are gravely misled if we think the struggle will be won only by prayer. God, who gave us minds for thinking and bodies for working, would defeat his own purpose if he permitted us to obtain through prayer what may come through work and intelligence. Prayer is a marvelous and necessary supplement of our feeble efforts, but it is a dangerous substitute."[187]

[186] Curry, *Love Is the Way,* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020)
[187] Martin Luther King Jr. *Strength to Love*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 131.

My experience through this intergenerational conversation on the podcast leads me to think about the role I play in modelling the long-term faith commitment to living with a prayer life. As Dr. King wrote, "Faith is the opening of all sides and every level of one's life to the divine inflow."[188] When you live by faith, you are dependent and trusting solely on the divine, which goes against the grain of the world. This, however, is the foundational practices of the church, which has not done a good job living out its ideals. There's trouble in the land. I desire to live out the characteristics of faith, love, and hope to inspire younger generations to come to believe that there are other ways of living out our faith in the 21st century. This podcast experience went well for me, and I would welcome further opportunities to engage with young people through this medium. And now that we are beginning to envision life after the pandemic, I still plan to return to my original vision of creating and hosting my own podcast.

**Live Music Events**

Six years ago, in conjunction with the South Orange Village Center Alliance and Gregg Burrus, director of Summer Saturdays Live Music Series All Around South Orange, NJ, Cafe Word Bookstore became a space to share meaningful conversations and gatherings via Open Mic and music events that are impacting the lives of Millennials and Zoomers as well as multi-generations in the neighborhood. Pre- and post-pandemic, the Cafe Word space offers community gatherings of gifted artists, musicians, poets, and storytellers who bring together the sacred and secular in the spirit of creating a Beloved community. Over the course of this demonstration project, I coordinated several

[188] Ibid. 135.

"socially-distanced" live music events through Cafe Word that are bringing to fruition much of my work and my prayers. I endeavor to build off these kinds of community music events in order to expand and enhance the impact of Cafe Word Ministries. What follows is a brief description and explanation of two such events.

May 1, 2021 was the kick off of the South Orange Summer Saturdays Live Music Series All Around South Orange, NJ, which feature two live music events each Saturday thru the end of September. On tap at Cafe Word was Nia Soyemi, the gifted Millennial vocalist, and Steve White, keyboard player extraordinaire. The two musicians performed outside Cafe Word Bookstore with a blend of Hip Hop, Gospel, Neo-Soul, and Fusion that set the atmosphere for the afternoon event. Soyemi has performed across the U.S., and in many cities in Europe and Asia. She is a musical theater actor and contemporary artist whose career began at the Harlem School of the Arts (HAS) and who most recently performed for the NAACP's New York Symphony Virtual Conference Convention. White was born and raised in New York City and has been an organist and pianist for many churches and various artists throughout New Jersey and New York City. His mastery of genres include Gospel, Hip-Hop, R&B and Neo-Soul. Steve is currently the Music Director at St. Paul A.M.E. Church in East Orange, NJ and is happy to be a part of the South Orange Summer Saturday events. Both Nia and Steve served as site team members on this project.

Juneteenth 2021 in South Orange Village and at Cafe Word Bookstore was celebrated with messages of thanksgiving and the spirit of joy knowing that recently recognized national holiday shows the value, in uncertain times, of never giving up hope. At this event, we remembered the first Watch Night Service of enslaved and free African

Americans who gathered in churches and homes to wait for the news of the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect. Hundreds of years of keeping hope alive brought us to a defining moment in the present day to share the past and present Freedom stories from our community, which still struggles to exercise the inherent rights of freedom and justice in this country. This event was indeed a stunning moment in American history. On Friday, June 18, 2021, President Joe Biden along with Vice President Kamala Harris and members of congress signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law, effective immediately, creating a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the U.S. The Juneteenth National Independence Day is the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Day was established in 1983. During my own presentation remarks at the event, I acknowledged that Amanda Gordon, the youngest inaugural poet in US history, had spoken words of Hope at the 46 Presidential Inauguration. On Capitol Hill, the twenty-two-year-old (GenZ) Zoomer delivered a powerful, soul-lifting, consciousness-awakening poetry reading of "The Hills We Climb," a poem she finished right after the riot at the capital on January 6. She stood strong on the back of Maya Angelou, who herself stood on the same Capitol Hill on January 20, 1993 reading her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at the first inauguration of President Bill Clinton. Like her young protégé words of Hope, Angelou's poem aimed to inspire its audience with a sense of unity and responsibility towards other people and the planet. Angelou was the second poet in history to read a poem at a presidential inauguration, and the first African American and woman to do so, a feat that was repeated when Gorman stepped to the stage.

It is evident that God's Divine plans and His Perfect Will are moving throughout this troubled land and through all the world in His own time to bring equality and respect for people of all colors, especially African Americans and oppressed people all over the world. In His time, despite the challenges that will continue to come, God's Perfect Will is overcoming all oppression.

As people gathered, the event opened with music featuring Nia Soyemi and Steve White who set the atmosphere by inviting the audience to join in singing the Black National Anthem and other Freedom songs. Susan Gaddy Pope, a dancer and the author of *Dancing My Prayers*, read a body of text written from the spirit of an elder who she is researching as part of her Dissertation for her Doctor of Ministry in Dance. Darrell Pope, a poet and Susan's husband, read a letter written to the ancestors. I concluded the event by reading a History of Juneteenth as explained by the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Bill Agnellino, owner of the "Reservoir Restaurant," a neighboring business of Cafe Word, provided the meal for the event and joined in the music. The event drew many people from the community to stop by and celebrate Juneteenth with us.

Altogether, my ministry has expanded in its reach and potential through the simultaneous pressures of this doctoral demonstration project *and*, oddly enough, the COVID-19 pandemic. I have learned to adapt my ministry to the needs of the moment and watch as God works out for good all that he sets in motion. I have become much more versatile at Microsoft Office and the tools of social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as Zoom, in the context of all the planning and marketing and recording of the live music events through Cafe Word. I also have an

inside perspective, now, on podcast planning and production and hope to develop those talents further. Through the interpersonal reach of THE WORD text message ministry, I have learned to trust God when he leads me to do as simple a task as write a text message of hope and thanksgiving from amidst the early and fear-ridden days of a sudden, global pandemic. I also have a much more expansive understanding of the Millennials—my Beloved Sons and Daughters, as I call them—under my charge through our frequent in-person and text-based conversations and via the Morality survey instrument that led to deeper connections with my respondents. In sum, the past year of this demonstration project has been both challenging and immensely rewarding for my work and ministry.

# CHAPTER 6
# RESEARCH FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned previously, many of the long-term research questions and strategies of this dissertation project had to be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the original vision still holds true and new fruit has appeared. God has given me a whole new outreach method through THE WORD text messages, which I explained above in Chapter 5. Also, over the past year while serving as mentor for an intern's supervised ministry "field study" at Drew Theological School, I built database consisting of unique combinations of scripture verses and sacred and secular music to use as a resource in the context of future Bible Studies and Cafe Word events so that music and the Bible are continuously reinforcing one another in this space.[189]

In Walter Brueggerman's book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, he "finds there is a vision for the community of God whose words and practices of lament, protest and complaint give rise to an alternative social order that opposes the totalism of the day."[190] He traces the lines from the radical vision of Moses to the solidification of radical power in Solomon to the prophetic critique of that power with a new vision of freedom in the

[189] See Footnote F

[190] Subject Review by Walter Brueggemann and Davis Hankins from 40th Anniversary ed. 8/01/18ab).

prophets. Linking Exodus to Kings to Jeremiah to Jesus, he argues that prophetic vision not only embraces the pain of the people, but generates a fresh energy and delight based on the new thing that God is doing. Isaiah 43:18-19 declares, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."[191]

Brueggemann's ideas here become an excellent example of radical theology. The connection between religion and morality continues to be a historical and present-day point of contention that will continue to require ongoing dialogue as church and society agonize about the definition and measurements of values and vices. Many churches, unfortunately, have dropped a priority to better understand the younger generation's perspectives on values and vices. The pandemic appears to have exacerbated this lack of interest. I envision building closer relationships with more Millennials and listening to their creative perspectives on religion and morality.

This kind of morality and the ethical decision-making framework practiced by Millennials can be seen through the lens of a site team member who shared her feelings about the topic at hand:

> As a millennial I define my morality by loosely basing it on of the biblical principles that I grew up listening to but felt largely unfair. For example, I conduct myself by the golden rule "Do unto others as you want them to have done to you." For a large majority of millennials, myself included we've watched as the church and other religions have been very exclusionary toward certain members and while watching this, it felt very hypocritical and seemingly against the word of God.[192]

[191] (Isaiah 43:18-19 KJV)
[192] See Appendix E Morality Questionnaire and Responses

From my perspective, her transparency is real, and she is being authentic. She goes on to point out discrepancies in the church's treatment of members of the LGBTQ+ community and people of other religions, saying:

> My belief system is one that goes against the traditional Church teachings in this way, I am kind to those who are kind to me. I try to be kind to those who may not be kind to me and I try not to judge things I don't understand. In this way my intention as well as the intention of my fellow peers is to try to leave people as unharmed in our interactions as possible. If I don't believe in what someone is telling me OR their beliefs are in direct contradiction with mine, I do not try to convince them to believe however if they attempt to use their beliefs to dictate, shame, or judge a way of life then I will correct them. This is usually the accepted way, if you don't believe in the way someone conducts their life, keep it to yourself it's not your job to "save" them or to convince them that your way of life is the correct way.[193]

I try not to be ageist but, as a member of the Baby Boomer generation, I find these reflections by Millennials to be striking and personally challenging. Hearing these kinds of responses to the important questions of morality and practical ethics in today's day and age gives off a brighter light and offers me a fresher perspective.

As explored more fully in Chapter 4, I have argued that Millennials have a social consciousness and a righteous mind that must be explored to reveal and redeem the values they are depositing into the world. In my many ministerial interactions with Millennials, I have learned to acknowledge the wrong often done to them by the church and to be open to understanding more fully the negative impact and scars the traditional church has left on the souls of Millennials. Their souls are aching, and it is clear to me that fairness and open-minded exploration will help them find new answers, new attitudes to change exclusionary behavior toward LGBTQ+ people and those of other religions, such as Muslims, who are victims of this unacceptable, ungodly behavior. Discriminatory

[193] Ibid.

attitudes cause Millennials to feel that their parents and their churches are being hypocritical; therefore, spiritual leaders and parents have a moral obligation to change that perception by living up to their truth and humbly turning a wrong into a right. As their current leaders, our actions can and will impact them for generations to come. God honors Millennials' honesty, authenticity, openness and vulnerability to speak their truth. The truth, as we say, will always set you free. I have learned to sit and converse with them, sometimes even arguing, but always in a spirit of genuine interest and loving care.

Going forward, my primary research for further development is to continue inquiring into the hearts and minds of the Millennials God has given to me to serve and to begin, post-pandemic, organizing bold and innovative worship services and intergenerational events that can better serve this demographic. I have begun looking for models of this kind of service.

A year prior to the pandemic, in 2019, Grammy-award winning rapper Kanye West began hosting a series of pop-up "Sunday Services" at his own private venues in an effort to connect with God to bring about self-healing after dealing with a number of mental health challenges, according to his then-wife Kim Kardashian-West on an interview with *The View.*[194] West, famously known for his song 'Jesus Walks' from his debut album "The College Dropout," has been hugely influential in the last twenty years of mainstream Hip Hop and popular music production. In September of that year, he hosted his first service at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, a

[194] OCG News, "Kanye West Brings Pop-up "Sunday Service" to New Birth Missionary Baptist Church," September 16, 2019, https://ocgnews.com/kanye-west-brings-pop-sunday-service-new-birth-missionary-baptist-church/ (accessed July 10, 2021).

mega church pastored by Rev. Jamal Bryant, who is also known for his preaching style and influence with young adults.

At that New Birth Missionary Baptist Church service, West led his own 600-person choir, which joined the church's own choir and other local singers, for a memorable pop-up praise and worship service. According to OCG News in Atlanta, "The event was filled with traditional gospel songs and secular hits with modified lyrics. From the Christian ballad, 'How Excellent,' to West's remixed 'Father, Stretch My Hands,' the 30-minute worship service worked to bridge the gap between various generations and music affinities."[195] Tickets for this exclusive "Sunday Service" were sold for $500 and sold out in less than fifteen minutes on Ticketmaster. Pastor Bryant affirms, "We have to be intentional about being unconventional in our efforts in connecting with young people." Confirming what I have found in my own work, Pastor Bryant notes that, "It doesn't matter if its Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, we want to meet various generations where they are."[196] Over the last year, however, the pandemic has delayed events of this kind of magnitude, and it remains to be seen what "pop-up Sunday services" might look like once the COVID-19 pandemic had become more controlled.

As I made clear throughout Chapter 4, I am intent on doing the same thing as Pastor Bryant is eager to do—"meet various generations where they are." However, I have a different approach. In my presentation of my demonstration proposal, I discussed my desire to attend one of Kanye West's pop-up "Sunday Services" along with members of my Site Team to experience what I was proposing to do on a community level and to see if we could replicate aspects of the service. What I was proposing to do was reach

[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.

multi-cultural and multi-generational people of various church and religious backgrounds at a much smaller venue, off-site from any traditional church sanctuary.

My greater vision is to partner with the South Orange Performing Art Center (SOPAC) to be able to host larger events in our community. In the meantime, however, Cafe Word Bookstore will be able to host pre-event planning and provide studio space for recording sessions. I plan to partner with the Local Live Music Ambassador event planner and community partner to mentor Cafe Word's greater vision. South Orange Village is the home of Seton Hall University and many of the students desire to participate in events outside of the campus. Others in the community around me share my vision for Cafe Word as a venue for open-mic and poetry events, which would be open to all in the community.

The South Orange Village has recently published a Master Plan that will determine future development of the Township, as well as the Village's relationship with Seton Hall. "This is the first master plan since 1978," writes Daniel O'Connor of *The Setonian*, "and there will now be increased focus on pedestrian infrastructure, traffic reduction, and expansion of affordable housing."[197] This will open up an opportunity for Seton Hall students of religious studies and business management to do their field studies at Cafe Word and create, design, and lead future worship events. This will also bring a continuous stream of young, brilliant minds through the ministry and keep it adaptable and relevant.

[197] Daniel O'Connor, "South Orange Unveils New Master Plan to Guide Future Development of Village," *TheSetonian.com*, January 31, 2021, https://www.thesetonian.com/article/2021/01/south-orange-unveils-new-master-plan-to-guide-future-development-of-village/ (accessed July 15, 2021).

Also, the South Orange Village Center Alliance, which connects businesses with various resources and news updates, provides social media marketing to advertise local business events and encourage new and innovative community partnerships that embrace the uniqueness of the village. Cafe Word's presence here over the last six years has nurtured the soul of a community that is known for dining and community fellowship, and it will continue to offer an open door to those in search of a new experience that will represent the Beloved Community that Jesus created. I am eager to continue using Cafe Word's business presence as a ministerial site for God. I am eager to bring my ministry to the marketplace, to be out in the world as Jesus told his disciples to go out into the world and preach the good news. While I have great love for the traditional church, including its pastoral structures, I often find that ordained ministers are too comfortable inside their own churches and organizations, which is like putting a candlestick under a bushel. Instead, I want to combine the work of a businesswoman and an ordained minister in service of the Kingdom. The village of South Orange has great attributes and potential, and I envision every business "vineyard" in the village of South Orange partaking and breaking bread together, representing the Beloved Community, the Beloved Marketplace.

# CHAPTER 7
# MINISTERIAL COMPENTENCIES & CONCLUSION

Members of the Site Team dedicated a generous amount of time and energy to assist me in identifying the areas of strength in my ministry and to select areas that will increase my effectiveness. Their contribution to this competency assessment was rewarding and insightful, and I appreciate their dedication. The Site Team members who contributed to this assessment are:

Peuge Benjamin (Elizabeth, NJ), Dr. Ina Brown-Woodson (Plainfield, NJ), Brad Haugabrook (Atlanta GA), Duke Richman (Orange, NJ), Dee Williams (Orange, NJ), Bishop Aran McClary (Atlanta, GA). Ad Hoc Site Team members: Glinder Knighten (Irvington, NJ), Janet Hudson (Irvington, NJ), Ricardo Millan (South Orange, NJ), Kenny Synsmir (South Orange NJ), Nadege Simms (Union, NJ), Peter Quillin (Maplewood NJ), Omar Liles (Newark, NJ), Zyonna Thompson (Irvington, NJ), Andre Cousins (South Orange NJ), Tyler Bell-Santucci (East Orange, NJ), Brenda Estelle (Montclair NJ), Bishop Marvin Bradshaw (Newark, NJ), Melanie Daniels (South Orange, NJ), Brittany Daniels (South Orange, NJ).

My assessments of Ministerial Competencies and those of the Site Team are summarized below:

Theologian: During her early childhood, Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook was a member of the Baptist church. Early on, she was a student of the Bible under the tutelage of her pastor at St. James A.M.E. Church in Newark, NJ. She has continued this practice with her Bishop at a non-denominational church in Atlanta, GA. She augmented her studies at Drew University Theological Seminary where she developed as a theologian and has since been consistent in engaging in theological reflection and Bible study. Later, she founded and developed Cafe Word, a non-traditional parish setting. Both within, and outside of this setting, Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook meets her potential members where they are, i.e., automobile dealers' service areas, restaurants, and sidewalks outside of Cafe Word. She has demonstrated a capability to reflect theologically upon their experiences and life styles.

Preacher: Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook established Cafe Word Ministry and Book Store with a focus on and dedication to the "Hip Hop" and Millennial generations. Her gifts as a Preacher, and her well prepared spirit-filled sermons have stimulated and empowered her target group, as well as the general population, to grow spiritually and effectively in their walk with Christ. The music she chooses is framed appropriately to draw them in for worship. As a mother of two sons, Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook envisions the inclusion of African-American young men as community and church members. God guides her by identifying and communicating with young men whom society typically characterizes as lost souls. In general, she connects with them through discussions about their existing life issues, and then chooses sacred scriptures that have

applications for these individual situations. Once she has their attention, they pray together to ask God's help to grow their faith. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook's discipline as a jogger for thirty-five years attests to her practice of self-care.

Pastor: Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook loves people so she uses her God given talent to share the word about God's love, grace and mercy whenever and wherever she finds herself. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook is very intentional about her service to God. As such she is dedicated to teaching her followers and anyone she meets about the Word of God, encouraging them to live a Godly life. Her daily ritual includes praying and caring for the sick, bereaved, and special needs families. She visits family members who are ill, whether in the hospital or at home. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook is a caring, loving and selfless Pastor who consistently offers to help with encouraging words for anyone who needs it, both within her church and in the community. She even ministers to friends who have experienced loss of family and/or friends. Within her family, Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook ministered to her mother during her illness, and presided at the funerals of her mother and her mother's sister. She is an exceptional role model living for God. She is truly a shepherd to her followers and prospective members.

Prophetic Agent: Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook is extremely sensitive to the emotions of others. She senses when they need to engage in conversation, especially the Millennials she meets each day. She has an ability to speak the truth in love and a natural ability to inspire change. She is particularly aware that African-American males desire to succeed in their life choices, yet often times they have not realized that God is in control and will guide them if they are willing to listen and believe His words. Faith is crucial, and God's grace and mercy will prevail. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook will grow into a

stronger witness for the Lord with mentoring from her Advisor and the Site Team. She believes that God has called her to His work and nothing or no one can deter her from His mission for her. She has a commitment to the transformation of the world and a willingness to take risks in order to create social change.

Counselor: I have known Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook for 50 years. She has been such an inspiration throughout my entire life. Over the years, I have witnessed her journey and dedication to God. The assistance, guidance, and patience she exhibited when I lost my husband helped me to sustain through this life-changing crisis. She was available to me from the moment we were informed of his terminal illness until his final days. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook's prayers and nurturing nature aided me through what seem like the toughest seasons of my life. She is not only my pastor, counselor and agent of reconciliation, but also my spiritual mother.

Competencies Chosen for Development:

Technology and Social Media Management:

Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook worked previously in Corporate America in a technological environment where she utilized a proprietary software program called "UNIX©". She is a quick study and understands and implements new technology as a result of this experience. Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook has expressed her desire to better use current social media platforms because they are unfamiliar to her. Her discomfort with the unknown precludes her participation in the Social Media milieu. Her current studies in the Doctor of Ministry Program will open opportunities for new growth with technological applications and encouragement and assistance from her peers. She is an

eager and avid learner, so she will be successful in accomplishing her goals in this program.

Strategies:

1) I will become proficient and utilize the social media tools that Millennials commonly use, i.e., texting, Snap Chat, and Instant Messaging. To practice and evaluate my improvement in these skills, I will use the selected tools to conduct interviews with the target population.
2) I will develop my own podcasts to spread God's Word beyond my local environment.
3) I will record in-person or Zoom services and events and post the files to YouTube in hopes to meet and leverage my intended target audience.

Personal Evaluation of Technology and Social Media Learnings:

I have learned a great deal about the uses and power of technology in the course of this dissertation project. I was invited to participate in a podcast episode to share my theological ideas from my research questions as well as new knowledge from my survey data. I acquired greater familiarity with software programs for research activities via text messaging and interviews converted into Microsoft Word. I also expanded "The Word" transmission among millennials and their community, reaching out to 200 participants individually on a weekly basis and finding a much larger audience beyond. I conducted interviews that were held via the telephone and in-person, and I also created a database for scripture with music that is accessed via YouTube.

Financial/Marketing Management:

Increasing and maintaining an understanding of fiscal and marketing strategies are essential to the successful process of putting a quasi-ministerial plan into effect. The components of jointly managing a secular business with a ministerial branch require exposure to basic financial and marketing terms. This will require a greater understanding of budgeting and forecasting as well as tax laws and risk management. This basic knowledge, and the incorporation of marketing into a more digital stage, will present an opportunity to apply for and write grants for continued support of resources. Primarily, it is crucial for maintaining an ethical stance in ministry stewardship.

Strategies:

1) Expand further the new and complex digital tools of social media accounts to use for the dual marketing of the Ministry and the Book Store.
2) Incorporate effective financial/marketing best practice programs and tools to track data on state-of-the-art equipment.
3) Utilize the TikTok application to engage Generation Z, the emerging generation, whose ideas will broaden the scope for future technology.

Personal Evaluation of Financial/Marketing Management:

I have also learned a great deal about financial and marketing management over the last two years, and I now feel much more prepared for the years ahead with this bookstore ministry. I created an online survey with a target group while better using text

messaging and email. I also completed a grant application for financial assistance via electronic business software. That preparation required building a Microsoft Excel numerical chart for processing and navigating online grant application websites. I also learned a few business marketing strategies for future implementation. Finally, I discussed with a CPA a plan to develop best business practices for Cafe Word's various financial records: general bookkeeping, business taxes, and ministerial donations.

**Conclusion:**

Over the course of this dissertation project, "Ministry in the Marketplace," I have been gifted with the opportunity to more deeply consider the many ways in which my ministry and my business overlap. I have planted my feet on the firm, theological ground of a Hip Hop spirituality and a non-parish quasi ministerial plan that bridges divisive generational gaps between the older, traditional Christian church in the United States and GenXers and Millennials and the up-and-coming Zoomers. This kind of ministerial work and small business presence is premised on individual, Divine encounters in the Village of South Orange, New Jersey and wherever else God leads me to wander.

I have been stretched to develop new strategies and competencies, especially around social media marketing and financial accounting to better establish the presence and vitality of Cafe Word in South Orange, to extend the reach of that ministry, and to better steward its financial health. Despite a global pandemic that threw unexpected curveballs throughout the research and writing on this project, I am emerging with a newfound clarity and alertness to the movements of God in these ideas and visions. While the word 'woke' has become a largely (mis)appropriated and derided term, its

original meaning—its roots in feminist and racial justice "consciousness raising"—feels akin to my own sense of Divine purpose and mission.

In the course of this dissertation writing, I have become more fully conscious and more fully aware of all in existence of my God-given surroundings. I'm up. I'm awake and ready and willing to take the next step to lay down the next brick in the building of the Kingdom. I am intent on further establishing a ministerial presence and gatherings and events wherein I can help pass the mic to the next generation of leaders to speak into existence that which thus saith the LORD, at such a time as this. I have examined the processes and life of Cafe Word Ministries and my role within it. What Sensing suggested, has proven very true in my case:

> A DMin project thesis is simply one focused look at a process that is ongoing in the life of congregations and other para-church organizations. By examining the cycle through the lens of an intentional project thesis, expectantly, the pastor will develop habits of thinking and acting that will enhance the development of a novice into an expert. Afterwards, the pastor continues the path of lifelong learning.[198]

This is exactly my plan going forward—to continue learning and growing as a Reverend, community minister, and small business owner.

I am inspired by the way Ms. Lauryn Hill's spirit represents the "quasi." Her art embodies the sacred and the secular and handles the inevitable tensions with an ebb and flow that moves above the deep sands of nature. Not only is a revolution being rapped, but I firmly believe that there is now a resurrection of conscious Hip Hop prophets and poets who are rising from the graves of silence and moving out onto a platform of a Moral Movement of LOVE in a quest to build the Beloved Community.

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[198] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, 64.

I envision Hip Hop artists and young faith leaders as forerunners of an emerging collaboration, creating together a blueprint for a new music genre of a sacred and secular musical ensemble for the 21st century. This music—its sound and its spirit—will be used to better open up space for dialogue and conversations between the next generation of Divine leaders, whether they are GenX(Hip Hop), GenY(Millennials), GenZ(Zoomers), or GenAlpha. They are the 21st century activists that the church must pay attention to and allow to lead the emerging movement—the Moral Movement of Love. As such, we need to occasion more opportunities for spiritual mentoring networks to form so that Millennials can build trusted relationships with older generations. Viewing each other from a wisdom perspective can set the stage for the development of this worldwide Moral Movement of Love. According to Walter Brueggeman, in the book, *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*:

> The [mentoring] relationship assumes, when honest, an awareness of discontinuity, for circumstances and possibilities for the younger person are different; one cannot simply replicate or reiterate old wisdom without recognizing that a leap of imagination is required in order that the wisdom of older experience can be recalibrated for new circumstance." Thus, the mentoring relationship depends for its effectiveness on both in honoring what has been learned from the past and in recognizing that 'new occasions teach new duties.'[199]

The emerging leaders of the younger generations now taking charge in the 21st century maintain a passion for standing in their truth. This truth empowers them to bring forth the destiny God has ordained for them. Their moral, mental, and spiritual personification of the Hip Hop culture gives them the courage to revolutionize both the consciousness—and the conscience—of America and the world-at-large. It also gives them the ability to call

[199] Walter Brueggemann, "Mentoring in the Old Testament," In *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, edited by D. Cameron Murchison and Dean K. Thomas, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018), 7.

things into existence with God, which is solely in God's power and his right to do. God has called these emergent generations into existence not to see Him as a new God, but to meet them where they are in their understanding Him.

As Faith Leaders we must preach and teach about God in new ways. The younger generations don't tend to care about how much you claim to know or the credentials behind your name, they just want to know the truth. They are relational, not strictly religious, and will challenge any issue, or person, that does not speak truth to power. The first truth is that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and no one cometh unto the Father but through Him.[200] In my work and visions, I see Millennials aligning their thoughts and desires with God's will and purpose, which is the truth beyond understanding and utterly incomprehensible: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."[201] Today's youth cultures need to know how to show true Faith by aligning their thoughts and desires with God's. More importantly, they need to see leaders who are honest and real influences in the church and society. Jamal-Harrison Bryant, an American pastor and an influential leader of young people within Hip Hop culture, writes in *The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation* that "This generation is searching for leaders who will shatter the "title crap" with just being themselves, available, and address issues and not images the generation is facing."[202] He goes further to say, "if you want people to be transparent with their struggles and to pursue growth, then that is the very thing you must model to them."[203]

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[200] (John 14:6 KJV)
[201] (Matt. 6:33 KJV).
[202] Jamal-Harrison Bryant, *The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation*, (King of Prussia, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 92.
[203] Ibid.

The aim of Cafe Word Ministries is to offer and serve this transparent menu. Most importantly, I endeavor to be available—that is to be accessible, obtainable and willing to be occupied to service their needs. I believe that leaders must wake up and listen closely to learn the language of Love the next generation of leaders need to hear. God did not call us to understand everything that He does, but He has called us to Trust every decision he makes on our behalf. As it is written in the Book of Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."[204] Cafe Word Ministries is open and available to serve a transparent menu of Love for this generation.

Millennials are the next 21st Century Faith Leaders who have practical, relevant, restorative, and revolutionary prolific personas. Despite the many historical and societal challenges they have faced, they are the present and future prophetic voices and poets who must be listened to. They are the Hip Hop theologians who have gained respect for their God-given talents and gifts to make a major contribution to society and the world. They personify the image of the personhood of Jesus, as peculiar as it may appear. There is clearly a Divine Plan at work in the life-giving spirit of Hip Hop culture. There is a significant potential for a generational partnership to develop that bridges the gap between wisdom theology and practical theology, a culturally relevant thinking about how God moves and works in the space of the ostensibly secular marketplace. The mic must be passed on and the hierarchical and traditional church system must be slow to speak and quick to listen in order to better hear the cries of those in the wilderness, the

[204] (Isaiah 55: 8,9 KJV)

disinherited, the disenfranchised—the marginalized who need a neighbor to Love them as they would Love themselves.

As Christians and faith leaders, we must wake up and listen for the rhythm and beats of the life of new generations upon whom God has bestowed His light and vision. GenX (Hip Hoppers), GenY (Millennials), GenZ (Zoomers) and GenAlpha (who will ultimately change the game forever!) have been divinely sanctioned as they step forward toward the middle of the 21st Century. They are facing down a series of enormous challenges, but the Divine Wisdom is alive and at work in all creation, and leaders from each generation are now ready to rise up. This is my closing statement on behalf of the generations to come. To God Be the Glory!

Appendix A
Demonstration Project Proposal

MINISTRY IN THE MARKETPLACE
IN A NON-PARISH SETTING

By

SHEILA J. CAMPBELL-HAUGABROOK

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

February 1, 2020

**Challenge Statement**

Cafe Word Ministries, located at Cafe Word Bookstore in the Village of South Orange, New Jersey is where I serve as pastor. According to a Pew Research Study, one third of Millennials consider themselves to be unaffiliated with religion. This demonstration project will produce an assessment of a quasi-ministerial plan that will evaluate Café Word Ministries' presence during the past 4 years in the Village of South Orange; and develop a means to impact those who convene at the physical meeting place of this ministry in a novel way.

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

Cafe Word is a grass roots ministry that was birthed out of the formation of a weekly Bible Study at various Cafes in the open community of the Village of South Orange New Jersey. Local business owners that were not in favor of holding a Cafe Dine and Bible Study gathering at this venue disapproved our request to assemble five times before we gained success. Then God intervened and summarily opened the doors of Cafe Word Bookstore at the West end of South Orange. This location became the new meeting place wherein we commenced our study of the Word of God.

It is of note that my vision for this type of worship venue was conceived while I studied for my Masters of Divinity degree at Drew Theological Seminary. At that time, I focused my ministry to serve the un-churched, youth and young adults, specifically the Hip Hop culture. To that end, the Bookstore is purposed to bridge the gap between the sacred and secular millennial communities in this non-parish setting as we convene meetings in the building as well as in the community.

As my journey continued, and I completed four years of study at Drew University, professor, youth minister, artist and author Walter Lizard Hidalgo-Olivares, seized the mantle. Hidalgo-Olivares, in his publication, Beyond the Four Walls: the Rising Ministry and Spirituality of Hip Hop, explores how Hip Hop extends beyond the scope of music,

commercialization and “hood” life. In his Preface, Hildago-Olivares states, “…I would be lying to myself if I were to saythat God’s spirit is limited to the four walls of the

church and, therefore is unable to reach out to the broader secular places of our world."[1] Further, Hildago examines the unprecedented impact that Hip Hop continues to have in both our secular and spiritual communities. At Drew, my assignment in my mission field was to implement the principles of the Missio Dei, *Mission of God or sending of God,* the missional movement, meeting people, where they are in the Market Place and navigating with them, in a defining moment to the place of their understanding of God. Here I examined the character of Jesus, and how living Hip Hop aligns with one's knowledge of Jesus. I relied heavily upon my empirical knowledge of this subject as I navigated parenting two sons who were born nineteen years apart. My sons, Duke, born in 1970 at the beginning of the Hip Hop movement, and Brad, in 1988 at the onset of the Millennial era, are ideal prototypes that provide insight into my ministry and define how my soul is inextricably tied to it.

A more focused historical depiction of this ministry connects to the first Hip Hop worship service I designed to satisfy a requirement for my Church and Worship course at Drew. I held this event in my home. During that same semester I enrolled in a course entitled, "Spirit and Struggle" led by Rev. Dr. Vincent Harding, a Professor of History, Minister and a speechwriter for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Accompanied by two other elders, Rev. Dr. Harding attended and formally charged the initial structure of the service, and ultimately, my ministry. And, as an aside, but not without significance, I can step back even further into the history of this ministry to chronicle Dr. King's visit, in 1968, to my high school just prior to his assassination in Memphis

[1] Walter Lizando Hidalgo-Olivares, Beyond The Four Walls: the Rising Ministry and Spirituality of Hip Hop, (IN: Author House, 2011), 2.

TN. I was able to *'touch the hem of his garment*'! Hidalgo-Olivares asserts, "Because of its ongoing commitment to community organizing, activism, social justice and education, Hip Hop is worthy to be called a 21st Century socio-political, theological and Spiritual Movement akin to that of Dr. King, Ghandi, Mohammad, Abraham, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and most notably in this book, Jesus Christ and Paul the Apostle."[2]

Subsequent to the service in my home, I interviewed Dr. Harding to solicit his evaluation of my program. His comments follow:

> *"What was striking was the cross-generational congregation and the sense of freedom to worship together. I needed to be there, and so did the other elders. I think that this type of ministry can be used to liberate the Hip Hop generation, but more profoundly, what would be the pathway from your living room to some prisons because such a major portion of our youth is in prison. Then there has to be a pathway from where we gather to there or we will be missing our calling." Dr. Vincent Harding, May 2005.*

The Lord then graced my spirit and began to frame the depth of my theology on an even deeper level with a passage of scripture from Isaiah 61:1-2 (KJV): *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."* The spirit of the Lord revealed to me that the influence of Hip Hop, and now Millennials as well as Generation Z (Zens), opens new views of transformation, liberation and empowerment in Generations X, Y and Z that allow for development of key platforms that will enable us to connect with them. As my ministerial call

[2] Ibid, 53.

crystallized, my research at Drew introduced me to the work of sociologist Kenneth Clark who modeled the term, "involved participant observer." This process of observation is sourced from a research method that studies the social experience of an area of objectivity at a distance, but now expands the process to participate in the experience. As a result, the observer makes a commitment to its future and to become a member of the specific community of study, as an active agent, while studying the experience. The McAlvany Intelligence Report proposes, "The need for a "Change Agent that serves communities as an impartial catalyst for development of 21st Century, new paradigm ministry models…."[3] Ironically, I sit amongst my target group in the Pirates Cove, Seton Hall University Cafe, a major gathering place of millennial students, while preparing this research proposal. It is here that I observe, as they dialogue in study, how social media is their fundamental platform. Millennials are both the offspring and siblings of the Hip Hop (Gen. X) culture whose social conscious music genre captured the attention of a society, couched in the disparity of wealth and the dysfunction of religion that was in desperate need of a change.

At Cafe Word, the core-congregation socialization stems from a Christian denominational tradition. The attendees are moderately familiar with the traditional sermons that I preach even though the gospel message is not limited to a denomination or a tradition. It is simply the "raw gospel" that transcends the Love of Jesus. Moreover, it transforms the lives of those who are willing to receive the message as presented. At the services, Millennials resonate with the transparency of their interactions, the relevancy of the sermons, and the comfort and freedom to dialogue. The congregation is

[3] McAlvany Intelligence Report, "A Snapshot of the U.S. Church," powerlife.org, (Accessed September 28, 2019).

diverse, and may include intergenerational gatherings on any given week. This collective group must not be categorized from a traditional lens, primarily because the setting is a secular and non-traditional setting. As such, the attendees now become customers, many of whom are Millennials who enter the bookstore on a regular basis. However, the core congregation has participated in this ministry since its inception, and understand the importance of a personal relationship with God as well as how to identify with those experiences. And, as disciples, they have been trained and socialized in the principles of the Missio Dei, the missional movement, which advocates meeting people where they are in their place of understanding God. It becomes a "Verbal Network" when people talk to each other and trust that the content of their conversations comes directly from God. Within the parameters of Cafe Word Bookstore, at least ten Houses of Worship will be recruited to participate in surveys that address the future of the next generation of Spiritual Leadership. It is noteworthy to mention that I am spiritually covered by the traditional church, however, free to operate autonomously as the Spirit leads me. This is not to say that I characterize myself as a lone ranger; I hold myself accountable for my actions. And it goes without saying that I seek advice and counsel wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

Music and the Word of God are at the very core of my ministry. Music is the Love language that adds melody to the Word and becomes a symphony of worship for God to inhabit (Psalms 22:3 [KJV]). It is through music media that messages of social awareness and change have appealed to the human conscious whether it is sacred or secular. The history of music and its relationship to the soul demonstrate the impact and significance, and most importantly, how it functions to bridge generational gaps. Hip

Hop is a cultural phenomenon layered above a musical platform. Hidalgo-Olivares asserts that there are many methods of worship, choices of spirituality and developing a relationship with God.[4] Ultimately, all music has a worship component, and the foundation and design of every event that will be held at Cafe Word will have a component of music intended to orchestrate the atmosphere for Worship. It is through worship that we enter into the presence of God seeking a vibe that captivates the spirit of all newcomers. My current mission field in the Village of South Orange has been dubbed *The Live Music Capital of North Jersey*. It is our goal to continue to solidify an urban atmosphere by continuing to introduce and promote live music in all the venues in the Village.

Coming full circle in my ministry has led to the development of my vision that reflects the model of Urban Ministry in the 21st century. In this demonstration project, I will develop an assessment of and a plan for a quasi-ministerial program. I will use tools to research, evaluate and develop a blueprint, and architect a model that supports the template commensurate with a non-traditional church for the 21st Century.

As I concluded with this Introduction, it appeared that the world became deluged with one challenge after the other almost on a daily basis - an international pandemic, followed by an upheaval of racial and social injustices, i.e., the brutal murders of Black citizens, specifically Black males by White police officers. Just as this country prepared to reopen after a mandated shut down, a massive worldwide protest movement accompanied by riots and civil unrest began. The overwhelming

[4] Walter Lizando-Olivares, Beyond The Four Walls: The Rising Ministry and Spirituality of Hip Hop, (IN: Author House, 2011), 107.

majority of the protestors are Millennials, my target population. The results of the two realities have challenged and compelled immediate systemic change. This is why we cannot wait any longer; we must join them and support them as they carve their own images and make their own footprints in the world. They have the Divine wisdom and have laid claim to their own voices to obstruct the norm and create a path of their own design. And, as Dr. William Barber, in his address to a Jewish Reform conference, stated: "…in every situation, in every moment of history, many had to stand up, fight for a moral breakthrough and demand that America mend her flaws. Not because they were not patriotic, but because they were. They had to work to break through injustices to point a better way."[5] We are charged to confront the moral challenge of these circumstances.

[5] Rev. Dr. William Barber II, We Need a Moral Breakthrough": Remarks to the URJ Biennial, https://urj.org/blog/2017/12/06/we-need-moral-breakthrough-rev-dr-william-j-barber-iis-remarks-urj-biennial-2017, (Accessed June 26, 2020).

# CHAPTER 2
# ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

Cafe Word Ministries, located at Cafe Word Bookstore in the Village of South Orange, New Jersey is where I serve as pastor. According to a Pew Research Study, one third of Millennials consider themselves to be unaffiliated with religion. This demonstration project will produce an assessment of a quasi-ministerial plan that will evaluate Café Word Ministries' presence during the past 4 years in the Village of South Orange; and develop a means to impact those who convene at the physical meeting place of this ministry in a novel way.

I plan to train Millennials and the next Generation Z to develop the tools and design the prototype necessary for the non-traditional 21st Century Millennial milieu. We will engage in peer mentoring, using it as a tool to create the greater vision. Martin E. Marty, in his analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*, affirms that "when peers meet and talk with each other, or when a generous mentor and an assertive student engage each other, something goes on that has the chance of altering world views."[6] In this demonstration project, I will develop, with the input of Millennial mentees, an assessment of a quasi ministerial plan. It will research, evaluate and shape a potential model and blueprint of a non-traditional church in this post-modern era. In the book of Habakkuk, *Then the LORD told me: "I will give you my message in the form of a vision. Write it clearly enough to be read at a glance. At the time I have decided, my*

[6] Martin, E Marty, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison: A Biography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 27.

*words will come true. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting — it will happen." Habakkuk 2:1-3(CEV)*

There is a very familiar verse that has been quoted throughout history, "Change is inevitable," and when one thinks of a vision in scripture, it is a revelation from God passed on to the human mind, informing of some future event."[7] The Vision: God does not intend to leave anyone behind. So, it is important to expose the challenges that exist in our world today that are designed to leave His people behind.

This issue has become personal, not only because I have children and grandchildren in the target group, more importantly because of my love for all of God's people. In dialogue with a site team member, we discussed how churches create programs for Millennials, yet do not include them in the decision-making process. For this reason and more, Millennials do not identify with the church as a reflection of themselves and their value. Millennials, indeed, have a voice and, at times, a language that is unappealing to mainstream churchgoers. Moreover, they are transparent, straightforward, raw, stern, passionate and driven. They are unwilling to disguise these characteristics to gain entrance into a system in which they do not identify.

During the past four years, many souls from all walks of life have encountered diverse patrons and experienced the dynamics that exist in the Cafe Word Bookstore. Exploring their response to the need for a local bookstore in the Village has presented an opportunity to have conversations about their life

[7] "KJV Dictionary." https://av.16.11.com>kjbp>kjv dictionary>vision (accessed September 29, 20019).

circumstances, and their personal religious perspectives. These conversations reaffirm the need for systemic change.

During the previous decade, local bookstores in communities around the globe have become almost non-existent. This is due, primarily, to the birth, monopoly and transformative presence of online procurement, e.g., Amazon. Cafe Word Bookstore resurrected and appeared as old wineskin with a new paradigm. A conversation with a targeted individual revealed how bookstores now partner with cafes, wineries, and artists to bring new experiences. These encounters generate credulous collaborations that find ministries that operate in a non-parish setting. Cafe Word finds itself in this situation as it hosts open community events - Friday Night @ the Mic (FN@M), Sunday Word of Worship (WOW), Monday Bible Study (MBS) and Dancing My Prayers (DMP) Meetings. These same activities have positioned Cafe Word to become a gathering place that enables building spiritual bridges in a common space.

According to the George Barna Research Group, "85% of the 350,000 churches in America today are stagnant or in decline. Six out of ten Americans believe the church using strategies defined by biblical principles and contemporary applications are irrelevant. Only one out of three pastors believes the church is making a positive impact on American culture."[8]

Time is of the essence. We must meet people where they are in their attempts to understand God. New Paradigm Ministry Models are really the New Wineskins for the 21 century. "Because they are 'grassroots, community empowering' instruments in the

[8] George Barna Research Group, powerlife.org (Accessed September 28, 2019)

Lord's hand, they have the potential for influencing Christians, congregations, communities, and cities all across the U.S."[9]

The McAlvany Intelligence Report informs that every continent except North America has church growth.[10] The New Wineskins or Paradigm Shifts In Ministry ultimately impact how we must deliver the gospel message in familiar as well as unfamiliar spaces and places. There is a sense of urgency to mitigate the decrease in church membership. If the church is not growing, and 4.3 million Millennial are unaffiliated with religion, thus, missing from the pews, then the real question is what strategies do we need to develop to appeal to the next generation of ministers and religious leaders. How will they be influenced to step into leadership roles that will ensure continuity of embracing and endorsing the "Blood-Stained Banner" in the 21st Century? This urgency is of paramount concern as we imagine an entire generation that may face the threat of becoming devoid of ministerial leadership. Introducing a new paradigm that interests the target generation, the religious community, and the church must visualize the next generation as spiritual leaders.

A key component to this research is to examine, analyze and assess the ten houses of worship that are within walking distance of Cafe Word Bookstore. All of these entities are experiencing decline in membership, notably in the Millennial's category. Their efforts to address these disparities will be useful for our investigation and conclusions.

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[9] Vision for 21st Century Ministry Design and Community, powerlife.org (Accessed September 28, 2019)

[10] "A snapshot of the U.S. Church" from the McAlvany Intelligence Report, (November, 1998.)

Clearly, the harvest is plenty but the laborers are few, because old wineskins are unable to accept new wine. The transparent mindset of the present generation speaks to the need for the same in the ranks of the spiritual leaders. Spiritual Leaders are called to impart **wisdom** that will influence and guide their successors in the discovery of methods that dictate how they will assume responsibilities and move forward. It is, therefore, essential that the target group is empowered to insert its own issues and challenges that, once analyzed, will be used as best practices to bring about universal cultural and universal change. It is anticipated that we will identify our resources from event gatherings that draw large crowds.

There is no direct impact on the office of ministry about tradition or history because Café Word Ministry is a grass roots establishment that is mostly non-traditional by design. Any practice that has been transitioned into the ministry has supported its growth and given it some stability to support its sustainability for the next generation.

# CHAPTER 3
# PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

## Goals and Strategies

### Goal 1

Conduct advertising to attract Millennials and the community of South Orange Village to activities and events that Cafe Word Bookstore provides. These events include a Friday Night @ The Mic event via Social Media Platforms. Friday Night @ the Mic will provide a platform for Open Mic, Spoken Word, Poetry and Praise and Worship. The objective here is to bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular community to enable dialogue about how religion is positioned in Millennial's daily life.

### Strategy 1

Offer Friday Night @ the Mic community outreach platform that presents a variety of themes for participants to share and explore freely.

### Strategy 2

Designate an agreed upon, recurring date to hold a discussion forum that will enable individuals to discuss topics such as relationships, health & fitness. Invite local experts to participate in discussions.

### Strategy 3

Engage in dialogue with sacred and secular community members to discuss how Millennials connect with religion. Create dialogue about religion and Millennials among sacred and secular community members focusing specifically on social justice and police brutality. Given our present state of affairs, present a safe gathering place

for healing of heart and minds. Create a tool to collect responses about racism. Let their voices be heard.

**Evaluation of Goal 1**

The results of these discussions will be used to measure Millennials' values and ethical stance as well as how their voice matters as they navigate the path to assume their roles as the world's next spiritual leaders.

**Goal 2**

Determine how Millennials define and internalize morality. Do they have strong belief systems, and socially, have they discovered applications for their beliefs in morality to use in their daily behavior and in relationships.

**Strategy 1**

Convene a team of Millennials who can brainstorm and create a survey regarding their understanding of morality.

**Strategy 2**

Request participants from Seton Hall University Department of Religion to learn how Millennials describe and engage their beliefs around Faith.

**Strategy 3**

Interview parents of Millennials to discover how knowledgeable they are about their children's issues related to morality and faith.

**Evaluation for Goal 2**

Compare Millennials' responses to faith and morality against their parents' understanding of how Millennials responded on the same issues.

**Goal 3**

Build a team of musicians who are grounded in sacred and secular music. Their goal is to establish a platform purposed to share their gifts with the community and enable them to understand God's words through music.

**Strategy 1**

Exploit preferred channels of social media to connect with potential musicians.

**Strategy 2**

Locate grant writers who can identify funds to pay expenses.

**Strategy 3**

Using YouTube, convene a team of ministerial advisors to advertise Cafe Word's events throughout the community.

**Evaluation for Goal 3**

Evaluate the results of new Millennials participation on the music platform.

# CHAPTER 4
# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## RESEARCH QUESTION #1

Why do Millennials feel disconnected from religion unlike their parents who are very connected to religion? Was the previous generation stricter in their efforts to raise their children in a more religious environment? What shaped how religion has been passed down to the next generation? What are the issues that impacted the societal infrastructure that precluded Millennials the time to seek religious guidance?

In this research question analysis, it will be important to portray a traditional setting vs. a non-parish setting and depict how a non-restrictive, open environment allows for transparent dialogue without criticism or personal judgment. This environment will promote non-intimidating conversations that are atypical in the traditional church.

According to Pew research on social trends, "Millennials are the first in the modern era to have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income than their two immediate predecessor generations (Gen. Xers and Boomers) at the same stage of their lifecycles."[11] Is the real question here about the burdens inherited from a societal infrastructure that has placed emotional and physical constraints that allows no time for Millennials to seek religious guidance.

[11] Pew Research on Social Trends, https:www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the rising cost of not going to college

**RESEARCH QUESTION #2**

Does the decline in Millennials' religious involvement cause a decrease in their morality? Although 4.3 million Millennials are unaffiliated with religious practices, Pew Research reveals that they are not necessarily disconnected to a belief in a higher power. Is there a correlation between faith and moral values? In a recent nationwide Pew research study on faith and morality, results revealed, "…there is widespread agreement that faith in God is a prerequisite for morality."[12] Will the moral laws of the Old Testament shape and mold the next generation of Millennial religious leader?

The connection between religion and morality continues to be a historical and present day point of contention that will continue to require ongoing dialogue as church and society agonize about the definition and measurements of values and vices. Many churches have dropped the argument about how they perceive the new generation understands of what good values and vices really mean. Millennials have a consciousness and a righteous mind that must be explored to reveal and redeem the values they will deposit into the world.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3**

Who are the righteous and who are the sinners? Are we all sinners fallen from Grace? How do Ministerial Leaders epitomize Biblical lessons that inspire and enable Millennials to fully embrace the spirit of faith and religion in this post modern era? How will the gap between the sacred and the secular be bridged with a hermeneutical

[12] Pew Research Center, *Global Attitudes and Trends*, http:/www.pew research .org/global/2007/10/04chapter.3. views of religion and morality, (accessed 10/14/2020)

lens of interpretation, understanding and methodical approach of scripture without compromising the Gospel message? How must I unpack the challenges in the Vision with Love such that I am able to meet people where they are in their place of understanding God? How do I preach an evidenced-based proof of God?

All three of the Synoptic Gospels record the call of Matthew 9:10-13 (KJV),

> "*And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples. Why on earth is your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

This passage of scripture depicts a scene of the sacred and secular gathering in the presence of God; it supports the argument that barriers must be dismantled to save the lost souls. They must come together and sit down at the table of brotherly and sisterly Love and reason together on issues. "How can two walk together unless they agree." Music is the message of Love that joins souls in worship and dance, both the sacred and secular genres. How will we examine the Bible with a new lens, "new wineskin", new methods that can be put in place to shed a different light, "new wine" with a critical approach that supports the good of things. Millennials seek the unknown daily in their travels on social media, discovering the unimaginable, and they find it. We must journey with them fearlessly, not to lose, rather to make an incredible discovery that leaves a mark, stones in the Jordan to remember that we once crossed over with the guidance of Abba Father.

# CHAPTER 5
# MINISTERIAL COMPENTENCIES

## THE PROCESS

Members of the Site Team dedicated a generous amount of time and energy to assist me in identifying the areas of strength in my ministry and to select areas that will increase my effectiveness. Their contribution to this competency assessment was rewarding and insightful and I appreciate their dedication. The Site Team members who contributed to this assessment are:

Peuge Benjamin (Elizabeth, NJ), Dr. Ina Brown-Woodson (Plainfield, NJ), Brad Haugabrook (Atlanta GA), Duke Richman (Orange, NJ), Nadege Simms (Union, NJ), Bishop Aran McClary (Atlanta, GA).

Ad Hoc Site Team members: Glinder Knighten (Irvington, NJ), Janet Hudson (Irvington, NJ), Ricardo Millan (South Orange, NJ), Kenny Synsmir (South Orange NJ), Dee Williams (Orange, NJ), Peter Quillin (Maplewood NJ), Omar Liles (Newark, NJ), Zyonna Thompson (Irvington, NJ), Andre Cousins (South Orange NJ), Tyler Bell-Santucci (East Orange, NJ), Brenda Estelle (Montclair NJ), Bishop Marvin Bradshaw (Newark, NJ).

My assessments of Ministerial competencies and those of the Site Team are summarized below:

### *Theologian*

During her early childhood, Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook was a member of the Baptist church. Early on, she was a student of the Bible under the tutelage of her pastor at St. James A.M.E. Church in Newark, NJ. She has continued this practice

with her Bishop at a non-denominational church in Atlanta, GA. She augmented her studies at Drew University Theological Seminary where she developed as a Theologian and has since been consistent in engaging in theological reflection and bible study. Later, she founded and developed Café Word, a non-traditional parish setting. Both within, and outside of this setting, Rev. Campbell Haugabrook meets her potential members where they are, i.e., automobile dealers' service areas, restaurants, and sidewalks outside of Café Word. She has demonstrated a capability to reflect theologically upon their experiences and life styles.

***Preacher***

Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook established Café Word Ministry and Book Store with a focus on and dedication to the "Hip Hop" and Millennial generations. Her gifts as a Preacher, and her well prepared spirit-filled sermons have stimulated and empowered her target group, as well as the general population to grow spiritually and effectively in their walk with Christ. The music she chooses is framed appropriately to draw them in for worship. As a mother of two sons, Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook envisions the inclusion of African-American young men as potential members. God guides her by identifying and communicating with young men whom society typically characterizes as lost souls. In general, she connects with them through discussions about their existing life issues, and then chooses sacred scriptures that have applications for their situations. Once she has their attention, they pray together to ask God's help to grow their faith. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook's discipline as a jogger for thirty-five years attests to her practice of self-care.

***Pastor***

Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook loves people so she uses her God given talent to share the word about God's love, grace and mercy whenever and wherever she finds herself. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook is very intentional about her service to God. As such she is dedicated to teaching her followers, and anyone she meets about the Word of God, encouraging them to live a Godly life. Her daily ritual includes praying and caring for the sick, bereaved, and special needs families. She visits family members who are ill, whether in the hospital or at home. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook is a caring, loving and selfless Pastor who consistently offers to help with encouraging words for anyone who needs it, both within her church and in the community. She even ministers to friends who have experienced loss of family and/or friends. Within her family, Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook ministered to her mother during her illness, and presided at the funerals of her mother and her mother's sister. She is an exceptional role model living for God. She is truly a shepherd to her followers and prospective members.

***Prophetic Agent***

Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook is extremely sensitive to the emotions of others. She senses when they need to engage in conversation, especially to the Millennials she meets each day. She has an ability to speak the truth in love, and a natural ability to inspire change. She is particularly aware that African-American males desire to succeed in their life choices, yet often times they have not realized that God is in control and will guide them if they are willing to listen and believe His words. Faith is crucial, and God's grace and mercy will prevail. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook will grow into a stronger witness for the Lord with mentoring from her Advisor and the Site

Team. She believes that God has called her to His work and nothing or no one can deter her from His mission for her. She has a commitment to the transformation of the world and a willingness to take risks in order to create social change.

***Counselor***

I have known Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook for 50 years. She has been such an inspiration throughout my entire life. Throughout the years, I have witnessed her journey and dedication to God. The assistance, guidance and patience she exhibited when I lost my husband helped me to sustain through this life changing crisis. She was available to me from the moment we were informed of his terminal illness until his final days. Pastor Campbell-Haugabrook's prayers and nurturing nature aided me through what seem like the toughest seasons of my life. She is not only my pastor, counselor and agent of reconciliation, but also my spiritual mother.

## COMPETENCIES CHOSEN FOR DEVELOPMENT

### Technology and Social Media Management

Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook worked previously in Corporate America in a technological environment where she utilized a proprietary software program called "UNIX©". She is a quick study and understands and implements new technology as a result of this experience. Rev. Campbell-Haugabrook has expressed her desire to use current social media platforms because they are unfamiliar to her. Her discomfort with the unknown precludes her participation in the Social Media milieu. Her current studies in the Doctor of Ministry Program will open opportunities for new growth with technological applications and encouragement and assistance from her peers. She is an

eager and avid learner, so she will be successful in accomplishing her goals in this program.

**Strategies**

1) I will become proficient and utilize the tools that Millennials commonly use, i.e., texting, Snap Chat, and Instant Messaging. To evaluate improvement in skills, I will use selected tools to conduct interviews with the target population.

2) Develop my own podcasts to spread God's Word beyond my local environment.

3) Record services to leverage on either TV, Zoom or YouTube in hopes to meet my intended target audience.

**Evaluation:**

Using the tools, i.e., texting, Snap Chat, Instant Messaging on the Zoom platform to critique the level of proficiency gained. Request a written evaluation from site team technology expert.

**Financial/Marketing Management**

Increasing and maintaining an understanding of fiscal and marketing strategies are essential to the successful process of putting a quasi-ministerial plan into effect. The components of jointly managing a secular business with a ministerial branch require exposure to basic financial and marketing terms. This will require a greater understanding of budgeting and forecasting as well as tax laws and risk management. This basic knowledge, and the incorporation of marketing into a more digital stage, will present an opportunity to apply for and write grants for continued support of resources. Primarily, it is crucial for maintaining an ethical stance in ministry stewardship.

**STRATEGIES:**

1) Expand further the new and complex digital tools of social media accounts to use for the dual marketing of the Ministry and the Book Store.

2) Incorporate effective financial/marketing best practice programs and tools to track data on state of the art equipment .

3) Utilize the TikTok application to engage Generation Z, the emerging generation, whose ideas will broaden the scope for future technology.

**EVALUATION:**

Create an online survey with target group to measure the progress while operating on the technical platform.

# CHAPTER 6
# EVALUATION

## OBSERVATION METHOD

The evaluation process that will be most effective in determining the success of my demonstration project is the observation method. This method will monitor the consistency of detailed information the participants share about themselves during interviews, surveys and focus groups. This process of observation offers the opportunity to engage participants in conversations as well as informal interviews while the project activity event is in motion. The following observation protocols will be guided by my role as an "involved participant observer " influencing the setting as guided by the Holy Spirit. An experienced evaluator from the site team will provide real time feedback of dialog observed between the site team and myself.

## OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

**Ethnographic Study** - Participant observation, as the primary tool, will be used to assess the participants in their social and cultural context. This will allow engagement to effectively record the participants' perspective and experiences in the activities and events that relate organically to the engagements held at the "Friday Night @ the Mic" events. Questionnaires and surveys that address the cultural components of the target population, via social media applications, will be designed and purposed to collect data for analysis. This data will be distributed to the target populations and the community with a request to validate its authenticity as well as to assist in guiding the processes to reach target groups in their native environments. Moreover, we hope to bridge the gap between the sacred and secular. The voice and language of the target group will breathe

life into the process, enable more collaboration with the researcher allowing opportunities to co-author outputs. The participants' Parents will be contributors whose observations during sessions and other events, will reveal transformation in Millennials' behavior. We anticipate that more than seventy-five percent of participants will demonstrate an openness to debate issues.

**Triangulation Method** - Will be used to compare observed behavior and interview data to evaluate the differences/similarities between participants' public and private responses to "cross check" the consistency of perspectives. Data triangulation collection will enhance the validity and reliability of the research by comparing the research of participants who have different points of view. Three angles of vision interpretation, the insider, outsider and researcher, will measure the accuracy of the interpretations. A quasi-focus group setting will be developed including both sacred and secular participants to gather data unique to their identity.

Appendix A:

TIMELINE/BUDGET

| Date | Task/ Activity | Tools Necessary to Complete Task | Person Responsible | Budgetary Consideration/ Cost | Source of Funding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7/2020 | Proposal Approval by Director | | | | |
| 7/2020 | Meet with Advisor | Copy of Approved DP | SJCH | | |
| 7/2020 | Meet with Site Team | Zoom | SJCH | | |
| 7/2020 | Meet with Project Team | Zoom | SJCH | | |
| 7/2020 | Goal 1 - Advertising via Social Media Strategy 1 | Speakers/ Musicians Open Mic Themes | Peuge B SJCH | $500 | Grants Donations |
| 7/2020 | Goal 1 - Strategy 2 Discussion Forum | Advertising via Social Media Health & Fitness | Peuge B Duke R SJCH | $500 | Grant Donations |
| 7/2020 | Goal 1 - Strategy 3 Collect Attitudes on Policing | Advertising via Social Media Focus Group | Peuge B SJCH | $500 | Grant Donations |
| 7/2020 | Attend Financial Workshop | Quick Books SJCH | | | |
| 8/2020 | Meet with Advisor | Zoom Report Results | SJCH | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8/2020 | Library Time for Writing and Research | Review Research Results for Analysis | SJCH | | |
| 8/2020 | Goal 2 - Strategy 1 Morality Survey | Advertising via Social Media Create Questions | SJCH<br>IAB<br>ET | $500 | Grant Donations |
| 8/2020 | Goal 2 - Strategy 2 Focus Group | Advertising via Social Media Create Questions | SJCH<br>$500<br>ET | | Grant Donations |
| 8/2020 | Goal 2 - Strategy 3 Interviews on Morality and Faith | Advertising via Social Media Create Questions | SJCH<br>IAB<br>ET | $500 | Grant Donations |
| 9/2020 | Meet with Advisor | Zoom Report Results | SJCH | | |
| 9/2020 | Library Time for Writing and Research | Review Research Results for Analysis | SJCH | | |
| | | | | | |

| TIMELINE/BUDGET (CONT'D) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9/2020 | Goal 3 - Strategy 1 Musician Planning for Friday Night @ Mic | Advertising via Social Media Voices/Instruments | SJCH Peuge Musicians | $500 | Grant Donations |
| 9/2020 | Goal 3 - Strategy 2 Search Grant Websites for Funding Resources | Advertising via Social Media Identify Grant Writers | SJCH ET Peuge | Grant Donations | |
| 9/2020 | Goal 3 - Strategy 3 Seek Cafe Word Ambassadors | Advertising via U-Tube Advertising via Facebook | ET | $500 | Grant Donations |
| 9/2020 | Meet with Zoom Advisor Report Results | | SJCH | | |
| 9/2020 | Library and Research Time for Writing | Review Research Results for Analysis | SJCH | | |
| 10/2020 | Develop Podcast Skills | Rent or Purchase Equipment | SJCH Peuge | | SJCH |
| 10/2020 | Review Results Received | Existing documents | SJCH | | |
| 10/2020 | Write Data/Proposal Writing | Completed information from Goal, Data, Analysis, Strategies | SJCH | | |
| 02/2021 | Submit DP | | | | |

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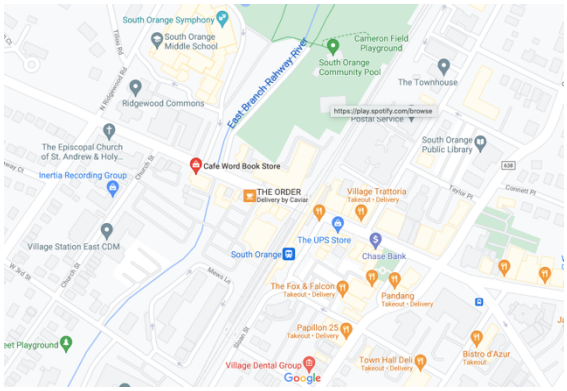
Appendix B
The Setting

Cafe Word Ministries
Photos, Map, & Business Plan

**Cafe Word Ministries LLC**
**108 West South Orange Ave.**
**South Orange, NJ**
**973-762-0555**



COMPANY DESCRIPTION

Founded on the Word of God, Cafe Word Ministries was birthed out of the concept of a global Missional Movement, meeting people where they are in an urban non-parish setting, which is now in the form of a bookstore. Cafe Word Ministries started as a weekly Bible study held in the local community cafes. As the Bible study grew in numbers, many of the cafes in the neighborhood rejected the presence of a bible study dining meeting and ultimately asked that we no longer gather there. After ten months in

the wilderness moving from cafe to cafe with my 5 faithful disciples, whose testimonies speaks volumes to the transformation of their own lives, God gave the ministry its own building.

*Cafe Word Bookstore* was birthed in the heart of the Village of South Orange New Jersey. In addition to a weekly Bible, the bookstore hosts the Sunday Word of Worship (WOW) service; Friday night @ the Mic, poetry, spoken word, open mic and Praise and Worship services. Now the ministry has a permanent non-parish setting. The voice of Jesus spoke, "…*Well done my good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. 25:21).*

The door of Cafe Word Bookstore is open to all of God's people, multi-culture, multi-generation, meeting people right where they are. These people have a desire to support a local community bookstore that is convenient and easily accessible. Many in the community have attended some of the worship events while others have become regular customers. The community has also offered ideas on the kind of events that would be appealing to them and their families. The Village of South Orange, NJ has been dubbed the "Live Music Capital of North Jersey," and they are encouraging local businesses to participate in offering live music events.

My vision for a Coffeehouse setting is grounded in my faith, obedience, and desire to serve God and the children of God in creating a worship space for a culture who has been on the margins far too long. My ministerial call is to evangelize to Generations X, Y and Z, which is, for the most part, almost totally un-churched. Consequently, the coffeehouse experience is the genesis of the church that God has ordained me to pastor. I

believe that this assignment was written long before I ever existed. I am reminded of what God says in his word: *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."* (Jeremiah 1:5).

Cafe Word is currently an art studio style coffeehouse that allows me to minister to both individual and corporate patrons that enter the space. At about 400 square feet, the space for Cafe Word is small, but I have a vision of moving to a larger location that would allow for props and spacing for DJs, musical equipment, a baby grand piano, audio visual screens, round tables, comfortable couches, pillows for seating on the floor, a large open floor space for praise dance (break dancing, step dance), and an open microphone to move about freely for poetry readings. Several other free style microphones would be placed strategically throughout the room for monitored open microphone moments. Paramount to the worship is a praise break. This is a dance moment where the congregation can become corporately involved in group dance or free style praise, which will be included after several edification moments.

In addition to being an environment that both the churched and un-churched can come together, the Cafe Word Bookstore fully operates as a nostalgic bookstore that customers can come and browse the latest book releases that cater to our demographic. The store is also equipped to host seasonal small events, book signings, meet-ups, and study groups.

## MARKET ANALYSIS

### Demographic: Consumers ages 17- 50

The people I reach are the proprietors and customers for other local businesses such as barber shops, network service providers (T-Mobile, Verizon, AT&T), fifteen area

cafe (including, Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts). Also nearby is NJ Transit, several bank branches (Wells Fargo, Chase, Providence, PNC), a number of pharmacies (CVS, Rite Aide, Walgreens), a Honda dealership, a post office and UPS store, multiple nail & Spa salons, as well as the large campus and residences of Seton Hall University. The communities that grace the village are the gathering places of everyday people that include Generations X, Y, and Z. They are multi-cultural and multi-generational. This is the mission field where I meet people where they are, and Cafe Word Bookstore is a welcoming vineyard to hang out in while they are waiting to be serviced. Conversations can range from a short exchange to fifteen minutes to a half hour or more depending on the topics that present an opportunity to share the Gospel message. The design of the space is warm and inviting coupled with music and candles that help to capture the essence of Cafe Word. Though my genesis is in South Orange, NJ the greater vision is to spread Cafe Word Ministries to all 50 states in the USA and ultimately across the globe.

**Competitor:**

Our biggest competitor is Amazon—the popular E-commerce site that is everyone's go-to site when looking to purchase anything from clothing, to electronics, to gifts, to books. According to wired.com, "Amazon began as an online bookseller in 1994, and although it quickly expanded into other ventures, it still owns and operates multiple publishers and online bookselling subsidiaries."

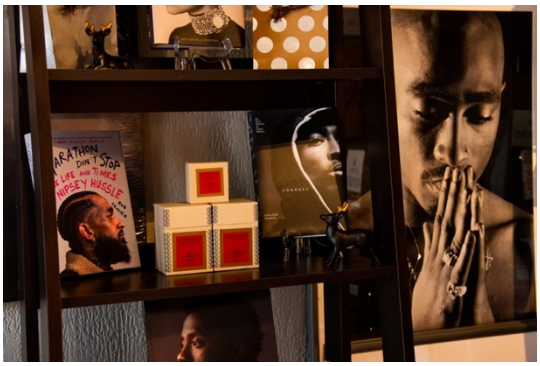
Amazon allows book lovers to shop their favorite authors with just a click of a button. With additional incentives like Amazon Prime, consumers are able to pay a monthly fee that allows them to have the items they purchase, delivered to their door in as little as two days. Amazon has eliminated the need to walk into a bookstore, browse for hours on end, and leave a new book. Though Amazon is conveniently accessible from your smart phone or computer, it leaves out one important factor that people in this day and age need—human contact.

Cafe Word differs from Amazon because we offer a face-to-face experience that so many people are now realizing that they need. In my years of being a watchman of God's word and preacher of His gospel, I have come to realize that Generations X, Y, and Z are individuals who are tech savvy and have little-to-no human interaction outside of what they are forced to engage in at work or school.

Cafe Word differs from Amazon in that it offers consumers an environment to come, shop, and be met with a warm welcome. Currently the shop is a comfortable 400 square feet that allows customers to come in and browse or have a seat to express to me anything they feel the need too. As an evangelist to the culture, I work to provide spiritual encounters at Cafe Word that tap into their feelings without overpowering them with ineffective religious church language. As customers enter the store and begin to familiarize themselves with the setting of Cafe Word, I seek to learn what they know about the language of church and then evangelize from that place of understanding. This is where ministry and the market place beautifully come together.

**What has Cafe Word Learned from Amazon?**

The first thing we have adopted from Amazon is to stock a wide selection of merchandise within the umbrella of our store aesthetic. Granted, Amazon is known as "the everything store" and we cannot carry "everything," but we can ensure that we stock Cafe Word with inventory that Generations X, Y, and Z would be inspired to purchase once they walk in the door. This can be anything from books, to candles, to art work and music. My customers are inspired to create the same ambiance at home when they are ready to dive into the new read they have just purchased. So naturally we carry those products to make that possible.



Imagine walking into Cafe Word and first being met by a soft, sweet smelling fragrance of one of our Votivo Candles. Our cozy jazz or worship music plays in the background and the warm earth tones of the store itself immediately captivates the customer, reassuring them that they have just stepped into a relaxed atmosphere.

Because of this, we not only stock books, but we also sell candles, art work, musical CDs and mugs. We even offer complimentary cups of hot tea and coffee when to customers. As such, a customer doesn't just walk away with a purchase, they walk away with an experience. This experience will bring them back again and again.

At Cafe Word, we stock books of a spiritual reference but we also carry books that expand our thinking and provide wisdom on how to maneuver in our world today. We house books that inspire women's

empowerment like *Becoming* by Michelle Obama. We also carry books like *The New Jim Crow* by Ccvil rights lawyer, advocate and legal scholar Michelle Alexander. Most especially, we house children's books and encourage parents and leaders in the community to volunteer their time to read to local children.

Experience Jesus Today
Who Was Martin Luther King, Jr?
THE BAHAMAS from A to Z
DREAM BIG, Little One
i want every girl to know that her voice can change the world.

The second thing we have adapted from Amazon is the convenience of offering our customers quick service. Though shopping online makes it incredibly easy to shop for various items, there are times we wish items were just available to pick up in store! Sometimes our customers need a quick gift. The holiday months are our busiest time, yet we do not exasperate our customers with long lines, large crowds and rude shoppers as most malls and larger stores do. Cafe Word is a quaint shop in one of the busiest sectors in Northern NJ and we are conveniently located next to a parking lot.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

**Organization:**

Reverend Sheila Campbell Haugabrook is the sole owner of Cafe Word. I hold the title of CEO, Founder, Store Manager, and Merchandiser. As the store grows in revenue, I plan to bring one or two more people on board, preferably a full time Store Manager and a part time employee. My vision for this ministry and business as an evolving, emerging minister of Generations X,Y, Z culture is one that is somewhat radical,

relevant, and reflective in my heart. I have come to know what evangelizing to the "unchurched" necessitates. My vision can only be Spirit-designed and Spirit-led to connect to this unique community.

**Management:**

My training in ministry will certainly be utilized in the setting of a retail store. My twenty years of working in corporate America in the Technical and Strategic Planning Department of AT&T brought about a tremendous amount of growth and development in my professional personality. My leadership traits in the area of manuscript design and production required me to persevere diligently and engage in diversity served. I led a small team consisting of two college students and seven Systems Engineers in the production of a User's Manual for the Unix Operating System. As the Unix System software specialist, I managed the entire project and contributed as both a writer and designer. It was through this experience that I became responsible for engaging diversity and interpersonal relations when production deadlines and schedules had to be met. It was also through this experience that my spiritual muscles were developed through prayer and fasting.

These skills were transferable to my ministry setting as I was assigned a position as Coordinator of the Youth Dance Ministry at my church. Deciding on new musical material to accompany a praise dance on a weekly basis required many of the same fundamental skills I had previously acquired, only this time with a much younger and more sensitive audience. In addition, each week, my role in this position afforded me the opportunity to work directly with the Youth Pastor and the Minister of Music to collaborate and decide on the choreography in relation to the Sunday Morning worship.

This positioned me to be active in many of the other ministries that were part of the worship experience. I had to be open to doing things the way they have always been done while also quietly pushing for new change and new vision. As a pastoral leader in the faith community, I deem this to be an area that will help me to establish my voice in the community.

The lasting impression that I hope to leave as a minister and business owner at Cafe Word is that of compassion, passion, and love. I hope others will say that Sheila could always be found with the people who had been kicked to the curb, giving them a hug of encouragement no matter how bad they looked. They will say that Sheila had no shame in lifting up a prayer in the midst of a storm, that she loved deeply and gave freely. I pray it will be said that she had an incredible spirit and that she run the race right beside many others, cheering them on as they went. It will fulfill my heart's desire and my mission as a servant of God if people say that Sheila had a heart like Christ and lived every day to share it.

PRODUCT

**What is our product?**

Books, candles, music CDs, art pieces, small home décor items/gifts

**What is your projected image?**

Over the course of time, my Divine mission is to introduce the Generation X, Y, and Z community to the Gospel and a faith-based

Christian community through worship, praise, conversation and evangelism. This is a meeting of the minds of a culture within a culture where Gen X, Y, and Z and faith-based individuals can join hands.

**How does our product/service differ from our competitors?**

I have come to know what is required to evangelize to the "unchurched." My vision can only be Spirit-designed and Spirit-led to connect to this unique community. My larger vision is to labor to bridge the gap between the faith-based Christian community and Generations X, Y and Z as one body in Christ. The coffeehouse experience presents an informal congregational (community) setting that will allow the two communities to gather in an innovative atmosphere to share the same quest for liberation.

I envision Generations X, Y and Z communities coming together in the Kingdom of God on earth to bring about divine liberation. As upcoming disciples for God they will, like Jesus, receive the Spirit of the Lord to perform this work. Luke 4:18 affirms Jesus words, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor… to set at liberty them that are bruised.*" Christ's power to transform this community can be an authentic parental guardianship bearing much fruit, "*Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."* (Psalm 127:3 KJV).

MARKETING AND SALES

Social Media marketing is the driving force behind making sales and gaining customer traction. We currently have an active Facebook page that we use for announcements, to advertise new releases, and to engage with our younger customers.

An Instagram page was recently created where we plan to interact with our tech savvy customers and offer discounts, host contests, and advertise upcoming events held in the store. Because Instagram is geared more towards Millennials and Zoomers, this will become a more thriving platform where we will consistently engage with customer feedback and hold ongoing discussions.

Social Media marketing is somewhat new to me but certainly not impossible to learn, maneuver, and utilize. In my research of finding the best way to engage customers via social media, I have come to learn that consistency is absolutely key. Because of my busy schedule, I am unable to post live updates across our social media platforms on a daily basis, but I can use platforms like Hootsuite to plan and manage my posts when I am not available.

Hootsuite is a social media management dashboard that allows users to pre-plan posts with pictures and captions, and it provides monitoring of such posts all in one place. This is a subscription-based program that will allow me to plan posts for the store for the duration of the week ahead. Of course, I will post on occasion but Hootsuite will be my back up social media manager until a full-time store manager is hired.

FINANCES

Book Prices range from $14.99-$69.99

Candle Prices ranges from $14.99-$34.99

Art Pieces and Décor Prices range from $29.00-$99.99

MONTHLY CAPITAL LIST:

Book Inventory (various categories)…….$5,000

Votivo Candles (various scents)…….$850

Votivo Reed diffuser sticks…….$132

Votivo Votive (qty 30)...…….….$180

Votivo Travel Tins (qty 60)…….$360

High End Sterling Silver Jewelry……...$500

Hand Crafted Jewelry…….....$200

“Quotables” card Inventory……..……..…$1260

“Quotables” ceramic Inventory……...$100

Various Art Works & Pieces……..….$500

Wifi & Phone……..…$80

Kraft Paper Shopping Bags (qty 250)..……...$54

20x30 Tissue Paper (qty 480)……..…...$41

ONE-TIME PURCHASES

Clover POS Station (Cash & Credit register)……...……$695

“Quotables” stand…….$250

Furniture……...$1000

21.5-inch iMac with Retina 4K display……...$1299

G-Technology 2TB G-DRIVE mobile USB-C Portable Hard Drive.....$100

Store Front Awning…….....$1500

Appendix C
"THE WORD" Messages (03/2020-03/2021)

One Year of THE WORD Sunday Text Messages
(March, 2020 – March, 2021)

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Top of the Morning Cafe Word Disciples,

THE WORD: Transforming Fear to FAITH
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
3/22/20

First we want to thank God for another day, for "This is the day the LORD has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it."(Psalm 118:24). My Sisters & Brothers, the world appears to be somewhat out of control: FACT. But our God, THE WORD, is the one who tells storms to behave, heals the land, saves from unforeseen situations, however, God restores and delivers: FAITH overcome the facts, every time. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our FAITH."(1 John 5:4, NKJV). "Now the God of hope fill you with all JOY & PEACE in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."(Romans 15:13). My Beloved Disciples, NO MATTER WHAT, HOLD ON TO YOUR FAITH. Remember when Paul & Silas was locked up in prison they chose FAITH over fear and because of their FAITH, their prayers, and their singing, God SHOOK THE FOUNDATION OF THE PRISON and everybody in the prison chains fell off." (Acts 16: 25-34) Sometimes we don't know why, but we do know Who. God is the only One who can FIX IT! Let's continue to have FAITH, praying 🙏 for each other and the world 🌎!!!
Peace & Blessings!!! LvU2Life ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples,

THE WORD: Trust the Process & Outlive the Experience
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
3/29/20

THANK YOU GOD 🙏 for another Magnificent Day, LORD, strengthen the world to TRUST You even though they struggle to understand Your purpose & plan. (Prov 3:5-6). My Sisters & Brothers, we all are like most people, we like being in control. PERIOD. We want things to happen according to our own plans & timetable. PERIOD. But sometimes God has other plans & God always has the final WORD according to His own timetable PERIOD. not ours, Thank goodness!!! The Bible records Job asking his wife a question as she watched him suffer. "Should we accept only good from God & not adversity?"(Job 2:10 HCSB). Job understood the importance of accepting God's Sovereignty (ABSOLUTE CONTROL) in his good times & in his bad, and so should we! American Theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr composed a profoundly simple verse that came to be known as the "SERENITY PRAYER "🙏, "God grant me the serenity

(PEACE OF MIND)to accept the things I can't (Coronavirus), the courage to change the things I can (STAY HOME & PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING & PRAY ), and the WISDOM to know the difference." Neibuhr's words are much easier to recite than they are to live by. "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to live and a time to die..."(Eccl. 3:1-2). This tragedy has touched us all personally in one way or another. Therefore, it's time to MAKE PEACE WITH LIFE! It's time to accept the unchangeable past, to embrace the priceless present, and to have FAITH in the promise of tomorrow. In this unfortunate circumstance that is beyond our power to control we must TRUST our invisible God to fight the invisible enemy. It's time to TRUST GOD COMPLETELY and OUTLIVE THE EXPERIENCE and reclaim the PEACE, His PEACE that passes all understanding that can and should be yours. TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! Amen 🙏!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples

THE WORD: LISTENING IS NOT AN OPTION
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
4/05/20

THANK YOU 🙏 God for this day and this precious Life. Here we are your children that you have created. Jesus, you said, "With men this enemy is impossible, but with God all things are possible."(Matt. 19:26 (NKJV). Grant us STRENGTH to Wait, Watch & LISTEN because something miraculous is going to happen. Amen! My Beloved Sisters & Brothers, Miracles, both great & small are an essential part of everyday life, but usually we are too busy to notice God's hand at work. We don't expect to see miracles, so we simply overlook them. We place limitations on God because we are imperfect human beings with limited Faith that God is able to do exceedingly & abundantly beyond all that we could imagine or think according to the power that works in us.(Eph. 3:20-21). But, God's power has no limitations. Now that we have been placed in quarantine, as a result of this pandemic, with limited daily distractions of everyday life, we are given the perfect opportunity of a lifetime to spend quality time in prayer 🙏 and then wait quietly for God's response. Prayer is a two-way communication with God. "In prayer the ear is of first importance". Listening is a process & like any other exercise you must work out consistently. Your daily repetition must be quite moments each day to study His WORD and sense His direction. This enemy has us all taking an introspective look at our own life and asking the question, What Exactly is God saying to me personally? If you sincerely desire to hear His voice, you must LISTEN (Linda lol) carefully, and you must do so in the silent corner of your quiet, willing heart ❤️! You will find His LOVE & His WILL for you there!(Jeremiah 24:7). TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! Peace & Blessings!!! LvU2Life ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: TAKE ONE DAY @ A TIME - THE MASTER HAS A PLAN
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
4/12/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 God for this RESURRECTION Sunday, help Your children to get to know You in the "fellowship of Your suffering and the POWER OF YOUR RESURRECTION." (Phil 3:10). Amen! My Beloved Sisters & Brothers "Give your attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help us deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."(Matt. 6:34 MGS). Given this present state of affairs, what better time than now to "Grow in Grace & the knowledge of our LORD."(2 Pet. 3:18). Today we celebrate the RESURRECTION of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who rose with all POWER! This POWER is in His WORD & His SPIRIT. The prerequisite to POWER in Prayer is Confidence in God. To truly trust God is to take Him at His Word with unwavering FAITH. "Without FAITH it is impossible to please God.(Heb. 10:6). Whatever He says in His WORD will not return unto Him void. (Isaiah 55:11) A major weapon of warfare is the Sword of the Spirit which is the WORD OF GOD that is EMPOWER by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 6:17). However, this invisible enemy, Coronavirus, is active, aggressive, militant, bold and assertive designed to intimidate & plant doubt & fear in our minds while we are waiting for the Mighty Move of God. It is then that we must take the Helmet of Salvation (Daily protection & deliverance from our sin nature) & the Sword of the Spirit; Praying always in the Spirit to protect our minds.(Eph. 6:17-18) It is impossible to have Faith & doubt at the same time. Whether we like it or not God has our undivided attention to learn us something personally. What better time than now to gain more knowledge about yourself. So let's celebrate the POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION by focusing on one (1) area of your life that needs immediate attention right now and write your plan of action, take it to God in Prayer, and let the MASTER PLANNER edit it. Learning can take place at every Age of Life. It's always the right Time to learn something new about YOU! Peace & Blessings!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: IN THE MEANTIME WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING AFTER THIS?
Rev. Sheila Campbell-Haugabrook
4/19/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 God for this Great Day, help us to "Be still, and know that You are God." (Psalm 46:10KJV) Amen! My Beloved Sisters & Brothers, Although the nation is sick & there is trouble in the land, we are still alive because, "It's Our Time". We must stand still until His Will is clear & maximize our potential so that we can operate in the correct timing of The LORD. God has a Divine timing & Divine timetable. In the meantime, while WAITING for His Will to be done, the question is, WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING AFTER THIS? Since action speaks louder than words, it is a good time to do some real soul searching about what you are expecting to do different personally with your life after you are released from being still in close quarters with your Love ❤️ ones. What is your focus today? Your life will grow deeper when it is focused, dedicated & discipline on your Spiritual Health. Are you willing to focus your thoughts & energies on God's Will, Blessings & Plans for your life?(Jer. 29:11) Since God is asking this question then surely God is expecting some input & action on your part to the plan. You must "Pray without ceasing."(1 Thess. 5:17) and study The Word (2 Tim. 2:15) to gain perspective and confidence in what you petition God for.(1 John 14-15). Then you must exercise your Faith by committing to investing quality time in search of your Divine Purpose. You must have Faith in your own abilities to do your best, to figure out how to solve your own problems & leave the rest up to God. "Faith without works is dead.(James 2:17). God is calling us to have a New Outlook on Life. This Coronavirus is a Life-changing personal experience that is giving us nothing but

time to take action to develop goals & strategies & present them to the One who is faithful. (Hebrew 10:23). The  One who Is Sovereign (IN CONTROL) of your Future. Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: TRUSTING BUILDS CHARACTER
Rev. Sheila Campbell-Haugabrook
4/26/20

THANK YOU 🙏 God for this Wonderful Day, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power..."(Rev. 4:11) Amen!!! My Beloved Sisters & Brothers, Now that over 6 weeks have passed with many unanswered questions & much confusion about the ones that have been answered. The question for you: ARE YOU ANXIOUS? The Word of God tell us to "Be careful (or anxious) for nothing, but in everything by prayer 🙏 and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God."(Phil. 4:6). Anxiety breeds confusion & God is not the author of confusion but of PEACE. (1 Cor. 14:33). Whenever you have to wait for anything there is always a period or a moment of anxiety or anticipation. No one likes to wait, however if you are TRUSTING God in the wait, It's a Good Thing! To wait on God develops strength in our character no matter how long it takes. When you are waiting on God to move on your behalf you are literally expecting a Blessing. God blesses in our lives to renew Strength Purpose & Meaning.(Isa. 40:30). BREAKING NEWS!!!GOD IS STILL BLESSING in spite of Coronavirus. However, God's timing and His process to accomplish His Will can go against human logic & common sense. When you are in the center of God's Will, you are in the center of God's protection.(2 Thea's. 3:3). This Coronavirus WILL pass, but God's Love ❤️ for you WILL NOT. No matter what the change in infrastructure & social landscape (New Normal) will be, the one thing that will not change is your "Free Will Power" to Pray & Worship our God whose Love, Purpose & Faithfulness is a sealed promise.(Heb. 10:23). Internal Worship will move anxiety & doubt in a defining moment. Prayer has a life-changing power & healing truth of God's Holy Word. Let's face this day with a Spirit of Optimism, Perseverance & Thanksgiving 🙏 considering we have survived six (6) weeks of a battle & war with an invisible enemy, Coronavirus, a battle we could not nor did not have the POWER TO FIGHT! TO GOD BE ALL THE GLORY!!! Amen 🙏!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: LIVING EVERYDAY ON PURPOSE
Rev. Sheila Campbell-Haugabrook
5/3/20

THANK YOU 🙏 GOD for this Great Day, for working all things out for our good according to your PURPOSE.(Rom. 8:28). Amen!!!  My Beloved Sisters & Brothers, Life is a series of choices, and each day we make a conscious decision that will or will not bring us closer to God. God gives us Will Power, but we must make the right choices in seeking God first and not "next". Our present circumstances tells us life is too short not to celebrate the life that God has given us

today with an attitude of gratitude 🙏 & Joy. We are to "Rejoice in the LORD always...(Phil. 4:4). We are commanded to be glad, so without further ado, let the celebration 🎉 begin. As the doors are opening to re-enter the (new normal), are you going out the door the same way you were forced in? Will you put God "next" after you figure out the new social landscape? You must acknowledge that God never comes "next" again. He is always FIRST! Matthew 6:33 reminds us we must "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God & His righteousness & all things shall be added unto you." Transitioning back into the economy can pose some challenges (people) however, re-entry is a state of mind. To be kept in perfect peace, our mind must be stayed on the LORD. Much of what we see now looks discouraging and now we are to pray for STRENGTH to TRUST Gods promise to keep us in Perfect Peace as we continue on the journey with PURPOSE. (Isa. 26:3). YES, God still has a DIVINE PURPOSE for your life! The battle for TRUST in our lives begins in our mind. If we TRUST the LORD, it will show in our action, but it will first begin in our mind. This is no time for your FAITH to waiver. Faith is a Strong Power, mastering any difficulty in the STRENGTH of the LORD. (Ps. 46:1). We must TRUST God more than ever in the process, "It's Not Over Yet" !!! God is still moving on our behalf in His Will. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every PURPOSE under the heaven." (Eccl. 3:1) Remember, God predetermines the events of Life. Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: THE GIFT💕 MOTHER!!!
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
5/10/20

THANK YOU 🙏 God for this Wonderful Day reminding us that "Every good & perfect gift Is from above, coming down from the Father of the Heavenly lights..."(James 1:17). Every Mother deserves honor for her service as first responder and Essential Worker in delivering Life on behalf of our Heavenly Father. Amen! My Beloved Sisters & Brothers, the closest person in your life to God is or was your mother who was created and stretched beyond measure to deliver you. The heart ❤️ of every Mother desires the VERY BEST for her children. The story of Jesus' miraculous birth directly highlights the peculiar character of God & the way that God has and will continue to handle events in our Lives. Here we are still in quarantine approaching ten (10) weeks of the pandemic yet God has still spared our precious Lives. No longer moving around @ the speed of the world, this new atmosphere has changed things, mainly the way you think. The stage of Life is set in your mind. If you can think it, you can achieve it, ALL things, with the strength of God.(Phil 4:13). The noise of Life is just about to re-start with a "New Normal" with a new attitude, however, some old stuff will re-enter as well. No matter what our present condition, we all have something different God wants to accomplish in us while He still has our undivided attention. (Jer. 29:11). God is calling you to have some FRESH DETERMINATION. Living on Purpose everyday must become your "New Normal". You are worth more than what you appear to be right now. While God is fighting for what you can't see, your assignment is to figure out & fight for what can see, YOU!!! The question is asked again, WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING? You must develop Spiritual Diligence & steadfastness in THE POWER OF PRAYER. (1 Thess. 5:17) Prayer changes things, builds you up & strengthens your spiritual muscles. The more you ask God to show you the plans, He will, you might not like it all, but TRUST Him to reveal your Ultimate Good. Do it! ask, because you deserve to Live your PERSONAL BEST LIFE when the doors re-open. Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: TOTALLY TRUSTING
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
5/17/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 LORD for this Amazing Day! I ask that You continue to grant us Patience to, "Be still, and know that You are God..." (Psalm 40:19). My Beloved Sisters and Brothers, After 10 weeks of Stay @ Home Orders, you have proven that you have "Staying Power", Endurance and Perseverance, and the one thing you know, apparently, "It's Still Your Time" Still "Time" to give God your undivided attention "First" and foremost, for a predetermined amount of "Time" for the Purpose of discovering the Reason for your Season.(Eccl. 1:1-2). Your assignment is to TRUST the Process and be prepared & ready to move in His Time! If you move when God tells you to move, everything is already in place. Check your to-do-list before moving out on Purpose. Have you done "Consistent Preparation"? Is The Word in you in abundance, can you use it with Power & Persistence for the next move in your life? When the doors open in the upcoming days, you must TRUST God more than ever before, because the 2 things that HAVE NOT CHANGED in this pandemic is the increase in the death rate & the number of cases. Do not be deceived, the invisible enemy is still moving rapidly & challenges are everywhere when the doors open. Therefore, you must focus your attention on the Presence & Power of our Invisible God that's with you always.(Isa. 26:3). You must silently "Work the Word" and watch God guard & protect on your behalf. The same God who created the universe is standing & ready to usher you back into the outside world & restore your STRENGTH to do so. You are still here for a REASON & that Reason is to live courageously, not alone, but TOTALLY TRUSTING in His STRENGTH to do so!!! He promised: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life."(Psalm 23:6). Amen 🙏🏾!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples, ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: "SURELY THERE IS AN END"
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
5/24/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 LORD for this Wonderful Day! And for your promise that "Surely there is an end; and we can truly have Hope for the future." (Proverbs 22:18 KJV & CEV) Amen!!! My Beloved Sisters & Brothers, one day this will surely pass; Coronavirus; it will be gone, but today is not that day! Therefore, you must continue to practice the act of PERSEVERANCE, the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition. Running a marathon, a long distance running race, strictly one of 26 miles 385 yards is run in great length, with concentrated effort and ENDURANCE. Now that 10 weeks of stay @ home orders have passed, this is what you are still up against, ENDURANCE! Ecclesiastes 9:11 tells us that "...the race is not to the swift..." but to those who ENDURE to the end. As we consider the uncertainties of the future, we are confronted with a powerful temptation: the temptation to "play it safe." Unwilling to entertain great hopes for the tomorrow, we focus on the unfairness of the today.

Unwilling to TRUST God completely, we take timid half steps when God intends that we make giant leaps of FAITH to live up to your fullest potential. FAITH gives substance to unseen things so that we act upon the conviction of their reality. As you ENDURE to the end, as the doors slowly open, your assignment today is to ask God to guide you to a place where you can realize your full POTENTIAL, a place where you are freed from the fear of the future. With each new experience of letting God be in control, your PURPOSE & POTENTIAL join hands. The prayer today IS NOT to ask God to lead you to a safe place, because scripture tell us that our "...safety is of the LORD." (Prov. 21:31) Your prayer is to ask God to lead you to the right place, and remember those two places are seldom the same place. OUR WORLD WILL BOUNCE BACK. God will prevail, He always does! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! Amen!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD disciples ❤️🎶🎶!!!

THE WORD: "...SO SHALL IT BE..."
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
5/31/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 GOD for this Great Day and your Word and promise that, "We can confidently say, "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you have hear the phase, "If it ain't one thing, it's another." Just as re-opening guidelines are being released from our present crisis, another crisis re-appears and comes to the forefront of our consciousness, "SOCIAL JUSTICE", a National Agenda Item that has not been dealt with for CENTURIES! Protest have erupted in at least 30 US cities over the death of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd. While we look for Peace in the land, "NO JUSTICE" "NO PEACE". Justice can't wait any longer & Black Lives Do Matter! Psalm 89:14 records, "Righteousness and Justice are the foundation of God's throne." "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the LORD. (Rom. 12:19). This is no coincidence, God's hand moved SOCIAL JUSTICE to the top of the agenda, saying URGENT deal with it KNOW! Coronavirus is an invisible enemy that only God can see and fight on your behalf, however, SOCIAL JUSTICE is an enemy that man can see and change and do right by. Proverbs 21:3 commands, "To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." This is TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!!! There is so much in Life you will not understand without FAITH, it supersede knowledge & understanding. This is not a hopeless situation, this is to expose and give you fresh knowledge about what it really looks like to be "back to normal." God says this will no longer be business as usual! Instead of rushing to go back into the world, you must be rushing to open the Word of God and ventilate your mind, your consciousness & heart ❤️ to gain power from on high to become courageous enough to fight the visible enemy. "Be strong in the LORD and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's scheme."(Eph. 6:10-11). In these trying times, the one piece of armor you MUST put on is the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. WHY? Because it will never go out and return unto Him void. (Isaiah 55:11).

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
6/7/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for the Blessing of a New Day! "Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honor and power..."(Rev. 4:11 KJV). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Weeks ago, the question was asked, "How are you going to re-enter the economy?" with the Evidence that there will be a "New Normal". Today the question is, "How will the economy RE-STRUCTURE the corrupt moral value system for Black Lives to re-enter the economy?". God took an Ordinary Black man's devalued life and used it in his death, in an Extraordinary way to demand NOW the RE-STRUCTURING of the corrupt moral value system for all Black Lives in America, in the World, and from NOW until eternity, PERIOD. This is At-A-Glance what God's plans for the "New Normal" looks like. (2 Cor. 4:8-9) reminds us, "We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed." And, "We know that the thief cometh not, but for to steal, kill, and destroy." However, the word says that, "I Am (Jesus) come that they might have life more abundantly." (John 10:10). It is obvious that the hand of God is present in this human event. While the world was focusing on a virus they have limited knowledge of, God was working on the world's UNFINISHED BUSINESS to change laws that discriminate against a safe life for all humanity, especially Black Lives! "The Revolution is Televised", The soul of America is being searched publicly. The oppressor must level up to the oppressed with an action plan, realistic strategies and measurable goals to "Dismantle Racism". What will the dismantling look like? LOVE OUT LOUD (LOL). LOVE conquers ALL Hate. (Prov. 10:12) However, we must not just sit on the sidelines and watch. NO, this enemy has risen its ugly head because it has a Due Date to be destroyed. PERIOD. Where do we go from here? STAND IN UNITY!!! Go Back to the Source, Back to the War Room and "Pray without Ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17) and put on your full armor of God, to gain POWER to fight from the One who is the Source of our STRENGTH & the STRENGTH of our Life. This is our Season to see evidence and results. God brings you into a Season to PROSPER you! Prayer 🙏 leads you the place to exercise your FREE WILL POWER TO PROSPER!!! Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: CONFIDENT EXPECTATIONS
REV. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
6/14/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for the Blessing of a Beautiful Day! Heavenly Father help us "Grow in grace, and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters. We have survived almost 3 complete months of the Pandemic and NOW the challenge of a Revolution. God's eyes are on you and your response to what you see! America is on the witness stand and being crossed examined about documented evidence showing thousands of years of racial injustice and present day killings of Black human beings. The Bible records, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."(Hos. 4:6 KJV). In order to

understand the dynamics of what is happening in the world, we must, first, understand the root cause that has produced the outcome of this evil behavior in order to "Fix It". You must know your History, but more importantly, you must quiet your heart and be still so that you can get to know the history of God's grace and knowledge so that you will truly know Him in this season. In knowing God, He will make known the mystery of His Will for you, according to His good pleasure. (Eph. 1:9 KJV). Then you can understand the Holy Spirit who guides you into all truth.(John 16:13 KJV). Once you understand that God is the Father of Glory, you can then ask Him to give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him so that the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened and you will thereby know what is the HOPE of YOUR calling, YOUR EXISTENCE, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance for you, as well as the exceeding greatness of His POWER for you through FAITH according to the working of His MIGHTY POWER. (Eph. 1:17-19 KJV). The POWER IS IN PRAYING HIS WORD. It is the "Sword of the Spirit". (Eph. 6:17 KJV). America is acknowledging that there needs to be a Redesign, Reform and Renewing of present laws. While America is trying to figure things out, God is calling you to "...Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the RENEWING of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God" for your life. (Rom. 12:2 KJV). If you keep your mind stayed on God, you will not only discover His PERFECT WILL, He will also keep you in PERFECT PEACE as you TRUST Him with "Confident Expectations". "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6 KJV). God will heal the land in due season! Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: STAY FOCUSED & PERSEVERE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
6/21/20

THANK YOU 🙏 HEAVENLY FATHER for this Magnificent Day and for being, "One GOD and FATHER of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." (Eph. 4:6). My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Over the last couple of weeks, the world we once knew have reopened with the face of its people covered up. This may not be a comfortable thing, but given our state of affairs this is the safe thing to do. WHY? As of yesterday it was reported, more than 2 million people in the U.S. have tested positive for Coronavirus and more than 110,000 have died. And now over 21 states have seen an increase in average daily new cases of the Coronavirus since the reopening began. Many people are ignoring the facts and choose to exercise their rights to not practice safe measures in the continued war against this invisible enemy. Be not distracted by the second enemy, (Social Justice & Police Brutality), because the first enemy is fighting even harder to keep first place. You must stay cautious of all the weapons of both enemies and at the same time STAY FOCUSED on your own weapons of warfare by putting on "the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day against the schemes of the devil." (Ephesians 6). Make no mistake children of God, THIS IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE! You must pray for BOLDNESS to "Above all, taking the shield of FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword ⚔ of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Then praying 🙏 always with all prayer and supplication in the

Spirit and watching thereunto with all Perseverance...” (Eph. 6::18). PERSEVERANCE is doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. The deceiver, (the devil) comes to kill, steal, and destroy any success in you understanding how and what it will take to fight against the enemy in this army with the POWER of our Heavenly Father. Romans 8:37 records, “Nay, in all these things we are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through him (FATHER GOD) that love ❤️ us.” AMEN!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: FEARLESSLY FOCUS
Rev. Sheila J Campbell-Haugabrook
6/28/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 Dear God for the Blessing of a New Day, one we have never seen before nor will we ever see again! Knowing this one thing, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of POWER, LOVE and a SOUND MIND.” (2Tim. 1:7). Amen! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters. There is a very familiar saying, “Things Will Get Worse Before They Get Better” BREAKING NEWS!!!The US broke another record this week, reporting the highest number of cases in a single day, Friday at least 40,173 new infections. 36 states are now seeing a rise in cases and 12 states have halted their reopening plans in hopes of curbing the virus. It is also reported that since the reopening of the economy, more younger people ages (18-35) are infected by the virus. This is the new target group of the enemy. The WAR IS NOT OVER YET! We have watched the reopening of the economy weeks ago with very specific rules to continue to prevent the spread of the virus yet many people choose not to participate in the collective effort it’s going to take to gain some level of stability with the invisible enemy. The US has now hit more than 2.5 million infections and at least 125,539 deaths according to John Hopkins University. As much as people are anxious to get back to the way things were, the reality is that things will never be the same again. Therefore, this anxiety has produced fear of the unknown, “The New Normal” that have a whole new set of rules. Children of God, if you really focus on all this negative news, the numbers look SCARY and fear will unconsciously find its way into your mind. Although, fear is an important human emotion that can help protect you from danger, and prepare you to take action, however, at the same time it can also lead to longer-lasting feelings of anxiety. But, the “Good News” is that if you keep your mind stayed on God, He will keep you in Perfect Peace. (Isaiah 26:3). Reminding you that “God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of POWER, LOVE and a SOUND MIND. (2Tim. 1:7). The spirit of fear intends to keep you from fulfilling the destiny God has on your life and from discovering how to live a joyful life in the midst of the storms of life. There are so many important lesson that God intends for us to receive in this Season. However, God says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer 🙏🏾 and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the Peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts ❤️and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6). Earnest prayer and thanksgiving is an antidote to anxiety. We are called to TRUST the process, FOCUS, and outlive the experience without fear, FEARLESSLY IN JESUS NAME!!! Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: HOPE WHILE WAITING

Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
7/5/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for allowing us to Live another Wonderful day! “For thou hast been a shelter for us, and a Strong tower from the enemy.”(Psalm 61:3). My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, “To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Eccl. 3:1). Knowing this, in God’s own time and according to His Master Plan He will heal the land.(2 Chron. 7:14). However, let’s set the record straight today, THE CRISIS is still being televised and you must pay attention. This is NOT THE TIME to take a station break even though you might be sick and tired of what you are hearing and seeing. The World Health Organization reported a one-day high for global Coronavirus cases, as the U.S. cases rise 1.7%. Cases top 11.1 Million and Deaths over 527,000. With all that said, THE GOOD NEWS is, you are still in a waiting position with the LORD. He will heal the land, in His Timing in His Will and in His Way. YOU CAN’T PUT A TIME LIMIT ON GOD. Amen!!! Be Confident of this one thing, this is not your place of Destiny. You got to wait on the LORD with EXPECTATION which is the substance of HOPE, which is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an EXPECTATION of positive outcomes with respect to events or circumstances in one’s life or the world at large. The POWER of HOPE overcomes all obstacles. This HOPE is the CONFIDENT EXPECTATION of what God has promised and its strength is His faithfulness to perform what He Promise to do. God’s promises are a pledge and a guarantee particularly of some Blessing from God. No matter what the circumstances, we are still being Blessed. Make no mistake about the POWER of GOD, His Blessings are still going forth while we are waiting for Him to heal the land. If you don’t Believe this, CHECK YOUR PLUSE!!! The one thing that God expects from you in this crisis, is for your FAITH not to WAVER, not to become UNSTEADY! Remember, FAITH is the substance of things HOPED for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1). Children of God, “Let us hold fast the profession of our FAITH without wavering; FOR HE IS FAITHFULL THAT PROMISED!!!(Heb. 10:23)  Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶
THE WORD: JOY IN THE CRISIS
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
7/12/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Amazing Day and the Power and Promises of Your Word, “...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, when your JOY meets God’s JOY that’s when you experience “Unspeakable JOY”. (1 Peter 1:8). Time and circumstances sometimes have a way of stealing your JOY! Now deep into the novel coronavirus crisis, the U.S. is reporting more than 3.2 Million infections and total deaths, 133,666 according to John Hopkins University. This is enough to make you temporarily forget that JOY is available if you keep your mind stayed on God, and He will give you Perfect Peace in the midst of any crisis.(Isaiah 26:3). This Peace must rule in your heart and requires a level of TRUSTING in the LORD with all your heart ❤️. This kind of Peace brings JOY. This is a gift of supernatural Peace that surpasses all understanding. (John 14:27). Right thoughts are important, for what you are thinking about is going to determine the course of your life. The way you think affects your experiences. Therefore, you must fill your mind with THE WORD of God so that it occupies your thoughts all the day long. You must study The Word of God DAILY! (2 Tim. 2:15). “And be not conformed to the world’s crisis and be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God for your life.”(Roman 12:2). Make up your mind that

you are going to be optimistic about the outcome of God's plans in this season of life. You must reprogram your thinking. You will never change your life until you change something you do DAILY! Remember that God knows the plans and they are for good and not evil, to give you a future, hope and an expected end. (Jer. 29:11). Children of God, always remember, "The JOY of the LORD is your strength" " (Nehemiah 8:10). Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: DEVELOPING ROCK SOLID FAITH
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
7/19/20

THANK YOU 🙏 LORD God for allowing us to see this Amazing New Day! Because we place our TRUST in You, LORD God, we know we live in safety. (Prov. 29:25). LORD, Increase our FAITH. Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, And we know, "Without FAITH it is impossible to please God: for those that cometh to God must BELIEVE that He is, and that He is a rewarded of them that DILIGENTLY seek Him."(Heb. 11:6). Children of God, we are now halfway through the year, and the pandemic is intensifying in many states. More than 394,000 new cases and 4,300 deaths had been added in the U.S. over seven days according to (Reuters Report). Given these basic facts, another shutdown IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE! However, the U.S. desires to return to business as usual and appear to ignore the fact that we are still more than ever under a dual attack by coronavirus and racial injustice. It is now that we must "...take the shield of FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."(Eph. 6:16). It is when you let your guard down that the enemy gain leverage and the impact is the greatest. Things appear that they are going to get worst before they get better because some people refuse to participate in being a part of the solution in fighting against the enemy. Beloved, make no mistake, IT WILL GET BETTER!!! Therefore, In the midst of this great crisis you must INCREASE YOUR FAITH with DO DILIGENCE in this painstaking experience. HOW? You must be even more attentive and persistent in seeking God, and deeply pondering on the POWER IN HIS WORD to sustain you in the next wave of this crisis. Remember, God rewards those who diligently seek Him.(Heb. 11:6). The Word of God promises, "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and PRAY, and SEEK MY FACE and turn from their wicked ways; THEN will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and HEAL THE LAND."(2 Chron. 7:24). Developing Rock Solid Faith helps you to understand, it is with great diligence you must seek God for the BREAKTHROUGH that only God can give in the next realm of this crisis. DILIGENCE is the key to success in every area of life. Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
7/26/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Beautiful Day and "How excellent is thy Lovingkindness O God! therefore we your children put our Trust under the shadow of thy wings." (Psalms 36:7).

Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we are now entering into the nineteenth week of this Life-changing pandemic which appears to have a well planned out strategy to infect and take as many lives as possible. According to the Wall Street Journal, Coronavirus Cases tip 16 million globally, up a million in just a few days. In spite of all of this, you must be GRATEFUL that you have a word from God that reminds you, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chron. 20:15). Therefore, this Word is to also remind you that when you are in the center of God's Will, you are in the center of God's protection. God created you for a very important purpose. HIS PURPOSE!!! And you still have important work to do everyday He spares your life. HIS WORK!!! "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2 Tim. 3:1). Given this fact, by developing more GRATITUDE 🙏 in your heart, you can face your daily duties in spite of this uncontrollable, unpredictable, dangerous Life-threatening pandemic. You can face this with the Perspective and POWER that only God can provide. Your task is to say THANK YOU 🙏 every time you think about God's Saving Grace, Unspeakable Joy, and Unconditional LOVE ❤️!!! Developing a sincere ATTITUDE of GRATITUDE🙏 is key to a Joyous and satisfying Life. So ask yourself this question: "AM I GRATEFUL ENOUGH?" It is only with Gratitude and Humility towards God that Life becomes rich. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess. 5:16-18 NKJV). Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: PERSEVERE WITH PATIENCE & CONFIDENCE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
8/2/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Magnificent Day! As we stand still in Your Presence, help us to fully understand that you are God. (Psalm 46:10). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, In 5 months this year will end. As we have now entered into the 5th Month of the ongoing unpredictable, unimaginable, invisible battle with the novel coronavirus, we are still being challenged to PERSEVERE with PATIENCE and CONFIDENCE.
BREAKING NEWS today, US Cases 4,767,441 and Deaths 157,933. New US forecasts predict the number of weekly new deaths may increase over the next month. Between 5K & 11K new deaths are expected the week ending August 22nd. Researchers say the payoff would be enormous if 95% of people wore face covering, it could save 33,000 lives by October. That's only 2 Months from now! Howsoever, Hebrews 10:35 reminds us, "Cast not away therefore your CONFIDENCE." Great is your reward when you TRUST God." Children of God, In these perilous times, TRUSTING IS NOT AN OPTION!!! With man this situation appears to be impossible. But, according to Matt. 19:26 "...with God all things are possible." TRUST means growing in Grace through adversity that was meant to harm you. "What the enemy meant for evil, God meant it for good."(Gen. 59:20). Regardless of our present circumstances, God has a rich and wonderful LOVE which is so abundant that it is truly immeasurable. Beloved, you must concentrate on TRUSTING God and on doing what you need to do, that is, exercising your spiritual muscles, by praying without ceasing and studying the Word of God to fully develop and practice TRUSTING even when you can't trace God's hand. Then relax in His Sovereignty (Control). Remember, God goes before you as well as with you into each day. You don't have to see the path to know it there, FAITH will help you to PERSEVERE with PATIENCE and

CONFIDENCE. Then you will be able to fully TRUST the process and out live this experience. Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Evening CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: GRACE IS SUFFICIENT
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
8/9/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Wonderful Day! LORD help us to remember "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."(2 Cor. 3:5 KJV). My Beloved Sisters and Brothers, considering the events that have shaken the world in the recent months, the U.S. has now surpassed 5 Million confirmed cases and continues to lead the world in number of cases. More than 162,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. while nearly 728,000 have died around the world according to the CDC. In spite of the ongoing weekly depressing statistical report, God is the GREAT EQUALIZER in the world, and to TRUST in anyone or anything other than God at this point would be foolish! By the Spirit of God you will succeed in the midst of this pandemic and when it is over, you will succeed at anything God calls you to do. You have the Supernatural Power of God in you to overcome the spirit of antichrist that would come into the world. However, the Bible records, "Ye are of God little children and have overcome them: because greater is He that is you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4-5) I SERVE YOU NOTICE THIS EVENING, God has a Vision for your life that is greater than anything you can imagine. IT'S PERSONAL!!! Between you and God!!! You must obey God's Word and spend time with God to receive the revelation of your Life. A Vision from God is something that will happen in the future. The Word of God tells us, God has plans to give us a HOPE and a Future. (Jer. 29:11) However, FAITH, says whatever you are Hoping for is here now! FAITH is a gift of God's promises of salvation and eternal Life for all who place their TRUST in Jesus Christ. God has spared your Life, because God has called you to something, and has a particular thing for you to do, regardless of whatever the New Normal will be. God's Vision is not burdened by your limitations. God's plans extends throughout eternity. Each day you wake up, your future lies before you, not behind you. The rest of your Life is the Best of your Life! Even though the world seems dim, your future is bright when you are in the center of God's Will. God's GRACE, UNMERITED FAVOR AND LOVE, IS SUFFICIENT to sustain you throughout all eternity! Amen!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
8/16/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Magnificent Day! "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their TRUST under the shadow of thy wings." (Psalm 36:7). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, No matter how troublesome our present situation may seem, we can FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE that our "God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think." (Eph. 3:20). "For the LORD shall be thy CONFIDENCE,

and shall keep thy foot from being taken." (Prov. 3:26). Yes, the statistics reveal that the U.S. is the worst affected country in the world 🌎 with more than 5.5 million diagnosed cases and at least 172,757 deaths. CDC also says the rate of COVID-19 cases in children is steadily increasing. And 200,000 Americans could die of COVID-19 by Labor Day. Children of God, this world can be a place of trials and tribulations, but when we place our TRUST in the Giver of all things good, WE ARE SAFE AND SECURE! God has promised us Peace, Joy as well as Eternal Life even in the midst of this pandemic. And God keeps His promises today, tomorrow, and forever. Knowing this, I ask three (3) questions today. Are you willing to place your Future in the hands of a Loving and All-knowing God? (Jer. 31:3). Do you TRUST in the Ultimate Goodness of His plan for your Life? (Psalm 23:6). And, will you face today's challenges with Optimism and Hope? (Rom. 15:13 NKJV). YOU SHOULD!!! Just a reminder, after all, God created you for a very important purpose to be fulfilled at His appointed time, not the world's time, GOD'S TIME! This is not a coincidence that you are still here. Eccl. 3:1 tells us, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven." And, God knows the thoughts that He thinks towards you, and they are thoughts of Peace and not evil, to give you a FUTURE and a HOPE. (Jer. 29:11). Yes, we are still waiting on the mighty move of God in this pandemic and make no mistake God is synonymously moving with the pandemic. However, for us, sometimes, the hardest thing to do is to wait. We are called to wait on the LORD and He will renew our Strength. (Isa. 40:31) Although God's plans do not always happen in the way that we would like or at the time of our own choosing, OUR TASK, as thoughtful Brothers and Sisters who TRUST in a Loving, All-knowing God, is to wait patiently for God to reveal Himself. And God Will!!! God has created a world 🌎 that unfolds according to His own timetable, not ours. (Eccl. 3:1). Thank Goodness! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
8/23/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Magnificent Day! "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their TRUST under the shadow of thy wings." (Psalm 36:7). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, No matter how troublesome our present situation may seem, we can FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE that our "God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think." (Eph. 3:20). "For the LORD shall be thy CONFIDENCE, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." (Prov. 3:26). Yes, the statistics reveal that the U.S. is the worst affected country in the world 🌎 with more than 5.5 million diagnosed cases and at least 172,757 deaths. CDC also says the rate of COVID-19 cases in children is steadily increasing. And 200,000 Americans could die of COVID-19 by Labor Day. Children of God, this world can be a place of trials and tribulations, but when we place our TRUST in the Giver of all things good, WE ARE SAFE AND SECURE! God has promised us Peace, Joy as well as Eternal Life even in the midst of this pandemic. And God keeps His promises today, tomorrow, and forever. Knowing this, I ask three (3) questions today. Are you willing to place your Future in the hands of a Loving and All-knowing God? (Jer. 31:3). Do you TRUST in the Ultimate Goodness of His plan for your Life? (Psalm 23:6). And, will you face today's challenges with Optimism and Hope? (Rom. 15:13 NKJV). YOU SHOULD!!! Just a reminder, after all, God created you for a very important purpose to be fulfilled at His appointed time, not the world's time, GOD'S TIME! This is not a coincidence that you are still here. Eccl. 3:1 tells us, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven." And, God

knows the thoughts that He thinks towards you, and they are thoughts of Peace and not evil, to give you a FUTURE and a HOPE. (Jer. 29:11). Yes, we are still waiting on the mighty move of God in this pandemic and make no mistake God is synonymously moving with the pandemic. However, for us, sometimes, the hardest thing to do is to wait. We are called to wait on the LORD and He will renew our Strength. (Isa. 40:31) Although God's plans do not always happen in the way that we would like or at the time of our own choosing, OUR TASK, as thoughtful Brothers and Sisters who TRUST in a Loving, All-knowing God, is to wait patiently for God to reveal Himself. And God Will!!! God has created a world 🌎 that unfolds according to His own timetable, not ours. (Eccl. 3:1). Thank Goodness! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: ENDURE WITH PURPOSE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
8/30/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for your precious gift of Life! "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 2:3). Amen! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, In approximately 34 hours you will be entering into the 6th month of the novel coronavirus. As of today, U.S. total cases, 5,934,824; Deaths, 182,149 and according to the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics & Evaluation, by Dec. 1, the U.S. death toll from COVID-19 could reach nearly 300,000. THE PANDEMIC IS NOT OVER YET! In addition to this report, devastating acts of killing black men and peaceful protestors is on the rise. The conscience of America and the world is on trial. So much blood is being shed for the purpose of changing hundreds of years of an evil code of conduct in the world's system. However, God's purposes never change. God's fulfillment may seem to be delayed by man's failure to do what is morally just to all human beings, but ultimately God is always going to go ahead and achieve His purpose which is promised in God's Word. The words of Psalm 46:1 promises that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Also, God promises to heal all diseases. (Psalm 103:3). As well as the promise of Perfect Peace as you Focus and Trust the Process. (Isaiah 26:3). All throughout Life, you must Endure life-changing personal situations that sometimes leave you breathless. Right now the world 🌎 seems to be trembling beneath your feet. However, you are to seek protection from the One who cannot be moved. The same God who created the universe stands ready and willing to restore your strength to Endure during this great revolution. IT IS BEING TELEVISED!!! So in this unfortunate circumstance that is beyond your power and control you must TRUST GOD completely like never before, knowing that your Creator is both Loving and Wise and that God understands God's plan perfectly, even when you don't. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." Isaiah 55:8). Children of God, this is not the time or the place to fall back into waiting for change, you are called to Act, (plan and prepare early to VOTE). Every Vote counts. Then, Endure (bear it with patience) while God is fulfilling His purpose of changing the status quo of the world's system. This is the time to get friendly with the Word of God, STUDY (2 Tim. 2:15), and develop an intimate friendship with the Holy Spirit, PRAY, (1 Thess. 5:17) while God is representing our case with full authority to do so. God has created you with resilience, you know how to adapt well in the face of adversity, and to sustain and hold on each day with Fresh Determination! Knowing that the JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH. Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD:  CONSISTENCY BREEDS SUCCESS
REV. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
9/6/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God  for this Beautiful Day! “Help us to keep our mind stayed upon you, Dear God, so that we will stay in Perfect Peace. (Isaiah 26:3). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, In spite of the ongoing daily negative worldwide 🌎 data, which reports as of yesterday, at least 6,244,979 cases of coronavirus in the U.S. and at least 188,538 people have died, according to John Hopkins University. Yet, you are called to be optimistic in relation to God’s promises and your actions must be guided by the values you hold most dear. Those values should focus on your Life, your Family and your Relationship with God regardless of the horrible situation you are facing. Your values must be shaped by God’s promises because, “He gives the power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.” (Isaiah 40:29). “...With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26). God said, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” (Exodus 33:14), even in the midst of (3 )simultaneous pandemics. “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee;...” (Deu. 33:27). And above all, God’s Divine Power has given you all things that pertain to life and godliness.” (2 Peter 1:3-4). Society seeks to impose its own set of values upon you and your family, but often their values are contrary to God’s Word and thus contrary to your own best interest. The world promises, happiness, contentment, prosperity, and abundance. However, the world is now on trial for discriminating and forfeiting these promises. But, genuine abundance is not a by-product of worldly possessions or status; it is a by-product of your Consistent Thoughts, your Consistent Actions, and your CONSISTENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CREATOR!!! Consistency is the mindset of success. Children of God, you are Blessed to have something to do for God which must be done, whether you like it or not.  Given an opportunity to do your Best, to be Consistent in seeking God’s Best for your Life, will Breed in you self-control, diligence, strength of will, Faith, Hope and Love ❤️ being the greatest and Truthful Living being the Highest virtue. GRATITUDE is also one of the greatest of virtues. Therefore, we THANK YOU God that our FAITH is the victory that overcomes the world 🌎!!! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: RESILIENCE, STRENGTH AND FAITH
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
9/13/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this marvelous new day of Life! “...My Grace is sufficient for thee: for my STRENGTH is made perfect in weakness...” (2 Cor. 12:9). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters the change in cooler temperatures this past week has given us a glimpse of the fall season that is ahead. There are predictions that the winter months will be a challenge with the continued fight against the unprecedented coronavirus. The U.S. now reporting over 6M cases and predicting well over 200,000 plus deaths by the end of the year. With the reality of the

seriousness of our present circumstances, it is without question that you must examine and pay close attention to your spiritual health and well being and allow God to coach you for the rest of your life. Life as you once knew it has consistently change over the last 6 months. Your circumstances have changed, your opportunities, responsibilities and your relationships have all changed in one way or another. You have been forced to be RESILIENT! However, the one thing that has not changed is God who is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb. 13:8). The God who is the author and finisher of your FAITH has not changed. Heb. 12:2). Faith must be the working principal in your spiritual workout as well as Trusting, Believing and Hope. Despite God's promises, despite Christ's Love ❤️ and despite your countless Blessings, from time to time as frail human beings, you can sometimes still lose Hope. When you do, you need the life-changing power of prayer, and the healing truth of God's Holy Word. Children of God, when you are able to embrace change under the powerful coaching of God, your RESILIENCE; your flexibility in handling change, your STRENGTH; your capacity to withstand the force of the changes in this pandemic will all develop, with intensity, your spiritual muscles. This will allow God to skillfully train your mind to cope with stress and create a powerful inner sanctuary for you to retreat to in a matter of seconds. Coach God will guarantee that you will loose the weight of stress, trials and tribulations that the world has imposed upon you. Jesus tells you in John 16:33, "...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Beloved, finding spiritual and physical balance in your life is crucial. The essence of FAITH consists of BELIEVING and receiving what God has revealed to you as your personal trainer. The more you TRUST God, the more your FAITH muscles are built and the more RESILIENT you become to receive the PEACE and JOY that God has promised. God always keeps His promises, today, tomorrow and forever. Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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THE WORD: EVERYTHING IS WORKING FOR GOOD
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
9/20/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Beautiful Fall day! "Beloved, follow Not that which is evil, but that which is GOOD. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John 11, KJV). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Hold firmly to the thought and know in this very moment: EVERYTHING IS WORKING FOR GOOD. This means that specifically and definitely, no matter how difficult or overwhelming the present situation and circumstances of this novel coronavirus and present administration seems to be, GOOD is still in it. Even when you do not see how this can be, tell yourself: EVERYTHING IS WORKING FOR GOOD. Your FAITH does not have eyes, but your FAITH will sustain you. Regardless of New York Times statistics as of yesterday, that reports over 6 Million cases and almost 200,000 deaths in the U.S., you must say it anyway: EVERYTHING IS WORKING FOR GOOD. And, BELIEVING God is working everything out in His own time and His own way in this multiple pandemic. With the Spirit of God working within your spirit, you have the ability to speak of impossible things, and in speaking make them possible. Matthew 19:26 records, "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all thing are possible". Make no mistake, this is not the power of your own words, but the power of Gods Promises and His Faithfulness to keep those promises. "God giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might God increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:29). Looking to the future, remember God has power over death and the ability to create a GOOD Life for you out of something as horrific as your present state of affairs and turn your sorrow into JOY! (Job 41:22). However, the importance of persistence in prayer is an ongoing daily practice regardless of what may appear to

be happening to the contrary in your life. Jesus reminds you that you "ought always pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Children of God, God is working a GOOD PURPOSE on your behalf and EVERYTHING IS WORKING FOR GOOD in this season of your Life! BELIEVE IT!!! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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THE WORD: OUT-LIVE THE EXPERIENCE COURAGEOUSLY
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
9/27/2020

THANK YOU, GOD🙏 for the gift of this Wonderful day. "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whither so ever thou goeth."(Joshua 1:9 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, You have every reason to live through this present life-changing experience COURAGEOUSLY because your life is valuable to God. You have powerful potential that lies within you ready to come forth through the very challenges of this pandemic you are facing right now. No matter what the present political administration has done or is planning to do to discourage you, God is ready to open up the gates of heaven for you to see the TRUTH about yourself which is that you are His Beloved, made in His image and likeness and able to cope in the struggle, to overcome, and move through everything that is happening right now. (Gen. 28:16). You must TRUST that God is in this experience and will defeat the enemy. If you put your TRUST in God you don't have to fear what others can do to you. King David writes in Psalm 56:4, "In God I will praise His Word, in God I have put my TRUST, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." As for God, His way is perfect and the word of the LORD is proven that God is a shield to all who TRUST Him. (Ps. 33:20). Your courage is strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 6:10). And Thankfulness is an attracting power for Blessings. THE EXPERIENCE IS NOT OVER YET!!! New Coronavirus infections are on the rise in the U.S. In total the U.S. has more than 7,074,000 infections with 204,000 deaths as a result of COVID-19 according to John Hopkins University. No matter how much trouble we are still facing, God is still in control of the experience and in one way or another some good has already come out of this experience whether you admit it or not. The fact that decades of racial injustice and turmoil is being forced to be dismantled is evidence enough of the Mighty hand of God. From the beginning of the pandemic, and now until the end, God has been in this experience working His divine plan for good and not evil. (Jer. 29:11, KJV). You must come face to face with evil to defeat it, conquer it and challenge the power of evil, COURAGEOUSLY! However, in this experience, God is actually transforming you and your life into something so much better and finer than you could ever imagine because GOD LOVES ❤️YOU!!! TRUSTING THE PROCESS AND OUTLIVING THE EXPERIENCE of this multiple life-changing pandemic IS NOT AN OPTION! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Evening CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: PRAY WITH EXPECTATIONS AND BE AT PEACE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
10/4/20

THANK YOU GOD 🙏 Creator of this Good and Perfect Day! God says, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33:3 NKJV). Amen!!!
My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Living in a world 🌎 filled with distractions, frustrations and complications, the one thing you must not allow is for this clamorous world to separate you from God’s PEACE. Let’s face it, if you could have, by now, solved any of the problems yourself, you would have done it. Acknowledging your powerlessness is the first step to victory. But acknowledging it is not the same as giving in to defeat and despair. It means that you can’t, BUT GOD CAN and HE WILL when you surrender to Him in Prayer so that God can give you Peace in these unpredictable times. You must be relentless in prayer and don’t stop praying until the battle is won. “...for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” (2 Chr. 20:15). Prayer is an attitude of the heart and mind that knows there is a good working out for every challenge in life. Prayer is the answer, it is power and can change all things that need changing in your life and in any circumstances that are occurring at anytime. This is not the time to question where is God in this experience, it is the time to reorder your priorities and spend as much time as possible in prayer and meditation quieting your mind and your heart❤️ so that you might sense God’s LOVE and God’s WILL in the midst of it all. When you pray in Faith, believing, an abundance of Blessings is available to you. You are precious in the thoughts of God. (Psalm 139:17). Prayer is an inner line of communication between you and your Creator. Nothing is more important than the time you spend with your Creator in prayer. Being still and claiming your inner PEACE is your spiritual birthright. “Be still and know that I am God...”( Ps. 46:10 KJV). Power from on high is the inheritance for every human being who will open up to God in Faith and quietness. Moment by moment, breaking news is now reporting over 7 million cases of Coronavirus including the President of the U.S. and members of his staff as well as over 200,000 deaths is drawing much public attention to the mental health and the fears of all the people of the land in this experience. But, God promises, if you keep your mind stayed on Him in the midst of it all He will keep you in Perfect Peace. (Isaiah 26:3 KJV). And 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds you that, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of Power and Love and of a Sound Mind”. Beloved, children of God, you must TRUST the SPIRIT within you to free you from the burdens of this world and bring you inner freedom from heaviness of thought and emotion and lift you above the strain of the difficulties you are facing. And in the process of TRUSTING you will find that anxiety is dissolved and you will find yourself less troubled about the future and more PEACEFUL about the present. Your TRUST in the Spirit of God will bring you into closer awareness of the presence of God within you who will reveal your life plan. (Jer. 29:11 KJV) Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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THE WORD: STRENGTH TO ENDURE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
10/11/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for the Blessing of a New Day!!! “He giveth POWER to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth STRENGTH”. (Isaiah 40:29 KJV). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, DIVINE STRENGTH is given to those who yield themselves to God’s will, God’s way and God’s timing of handling this present day and any crisis in Life. As imperfect beings, who because of your limited vision, it is easy often to resist and struggle to understand God’s will and way of handling Life experiences. However, you are called to “Seek the LORD, and His STRENGTH: seek his face evermore.” Remember the miracles He has already done in your life; remember His wonders and His decisions. (Psalm 105:4-5 KJV). Above

all remember, STRENGTH comes as you TRUST God to give you perseverance and perspective to endure. Let us not forget that God is Faithful and The Word of God proves His experience with bringing forth His people with Joy and Gladness. (Psalm 105:43 KJV). As hard as it may be to see any Love in this crisis, You are still in a relationship with God who is LOVE ❤️ and no matter how overwhelmed your heart may be during this crisis, you can cry out from the ends of the earth in prayer asking God to, "...lead me to that rock that is higher than I."Ps. 61:2 KJV). Beloved children of God, PLEASE DO NOT GIVE UP ON GOD NOW! The transforming LOVE of God gives you every reason to continue to live through this experience with Strength to Endure. Your life has been spared because it still has value, purpose and a plan to be fulfilled between you and God. (Jer. 29:11 KJV). God has been a shelter for you from this enemy and will continue to be. He will give you a new sense of Hope that you must hold to firmly, and a Peace that passes all understanding if you keep your mind stayed on God. But you must TRUST God at all times as you pour out your heart before Him. Yes, this week, John Hopkins reports 7.7 million cases of Coronavirus and 214,300 deaths and the political agenda is raging. "But the LORD is faithful and will give you STRENGTH and will PROTECT you from the evil one." (2 Thess. 3:3 KJV). If God is with you, and HE IS, then no one can defeat you. (Rom. 8:31 KJV) NOTE: The one POWER you do have in this crisis is the POWER to exercise your right to VOTE! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: FOCUSED FAITH
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
10/18/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for Your Faithfulness and the Beauty of a New Day! "But without FAITH it is impossible to please Him: for they that cometh to God must BELIEVE that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6) Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, The world 🌎 as you have known it over the last eight months has been a series of distractions, one after another. But The Word of God is very clear, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye May prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2). Your mind must stay FOCUSED on the Word of God. God's Word will never go out into the atmosphere and return unto Him void, but it will accomplish everything that it was sent to do and it shall prosper. (Isa. 55:11) FOCUED FAITH allows you to have Persistent PEACE while the Divine Perfect Plan is unfolding in the world. Children of God do not abandon HOPE in the future when things look hopeless. In this time of trouble, until God reveal His plan, you must remain Steadfast, Unmovable and TRUST in the Merciful Goodness of you Heavenly Father until the plan is completely finished. While waiting on the LORD, you are invited to "Cast all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."(1 Pet. 5:7). Even though God operates on His own timetable, it does not supersede His LOVE ❤️ for you. Know this one thing, God Loves you with an EVERLASTING LOVE ❤️ (Jer. 31:3). And that JOY will replace the sorrow of the catastrophic event. The discipline of a FOCUSED FAITH will transform your life forever and reach to the core of your consciousness and block any present or future distractions. Be not be deceived, Children of God, the Coronavirus is still rapidly surging in the world. This is the latest proof according to CDC data and other sources. The U.S. reporting total cases: 8,058,127 and total deaths: 218,461. Children of God, When your FAITH begins to waver, ask God to help you

TRUST Him more. Your FAITH must never be an afterthought, it must be a FOCUSED PRIORITY! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: WALK IT OUT IN PEACE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
10/25/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Wonderful New Day! Help your Children to Walk in Peace! "And let the Peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col. 3:15 KJV). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, And from far away the LORD appeared to his people and said, "I LOVE ❤️ you people with a LOVE that will last forever. That is why I have continued showing you kindness." (Jer. 31:3 NCV). Peace of mind is one of the greatest acts of kindness that the human conscience can receive. And if you keep your mind stayed on God, He will keep you in perfect Peace, requiring nothing more than you TRUST in Him. (Isa. 26:3 KJV). Genuine Peace is a spiritual gift from God to those who Trust in Him and follow His lead. If you don't find Peace and Contentment in God first, YOU WILL NEVER FIND IT ANYWHERE ELSE!!! But if you put your Faith and Trust in Him, you will be Blessed with an inner Peace that is beyond human understanding. "And the Peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts ❤️ and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7 KJV). Being at Peace you can determine what you are expecting God to do with your Life for His Glory! YES, God does deserve All The Glory! Make no mistake, God is the One who has saved your Life from this multiple present pandemics occurring in the world 🌎 today. Let me be clear, understanding the value of your Life does not depend on who wins the Presidential election in the next nine days. However, do not let this Good News stop you from exercising your right to VOTE EARLY!!! Trusting God means being at PEACE no matter what the outcome will be. Your Life will continue and I repeat, Your value points directly at how and what you are going to do with your Life with the guidance, protection and the encouragement from God who is concerned about the well-being of your Life as long as you live. Children of God, The LORD is the Lover of your soul and understands you perfectly, knows your value and LOVES ❤️ you eternally. The gospel of Luke 12:7 records, "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." BREAKING NEWS: Coronavirus has no respect for anything and is rapidly spiking in the U.S. reporting its second highest day of cases since the pandemic began. Now totaling 8.5 Million cases and 224,891 Deaths according to John Hopkins University. The war is not over and neither is your Life. "Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of the great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. You must continue to stand still and see the salvation of the LORD who is and will be with you." (2 Chron. 20:15,17 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: LOVE WILL HEAL THE LAND
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook

11/1/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Dear God for this Magnificent New Day! “For I will restore health unto thee and I will HEAL thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD...”(Jer. 30:17 (KJV). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, God is HEALING the Land right now! It is occurring at this very moment whether you know it or not. There is no need for you to have some mystical experience or even be aware of how it is happening. All you need to do is relax, let go, and be assured that it is being done and that God’s HEALING POWER will see you through this season of your life. Whether you have a lot of spiritual understanding or a little or whether you have a great deal of Faith or not, the fact still remains, LOVE ❤️ IS HEALING THE LAND. “Behold, I Am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?”(Jer. 32:27 KJV). God will, by any means necessary, Heal and reveal His Blessings in this novel coronavirus and political upheaval. You need not question, reason, or seek out ways to understand the nature of this beast. LOVE will at the right time and appropriate moment make His presence known for He is already at work within every detail bringing HEALING in every aspect to the world 🌎 that so desperately needs it. Therefore, there is no need to allow negative thoughts, doubts and fears to fill your mind as you witness the changes that will take place expecting that God will bring the right results out of this situation. Until God reveals the Blessing you must place yourself in a receptive attitude, readying yourself to receive the Blessing. YOU MUST TRUST THE PROCESS! The ways of God’s Love and His HEALING POWER transcends our concepts. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa. 55:9 KJV). There is no limit to the HEALING POWER of God or to the reach of the Healing touch and presence of Jesus Christ. John Hopkins University now reports, 9.1 Million U.S. coronavirus cases and 230,000 deaths. It is predicted that things will get worst before they get better. Your Heavenly Father, the Creator of the universe delights in what looks like impossibilities to you. “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, WITH MEN THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE; BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.”(Matthew 19:26 KJV). Today and everyday you must look to the Ultimate  Source of your Hope, Strength and Peace. That Source is LOVE ❤️ that stands always ready and able TO DO exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the POWER that worketh in us.”(Eph. 3:20 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD:  Humble Gratitude 🙏!!!
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
11/8/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful Day and the Amazing Power of Your LOVE ❤️!!! “Enter into His gates with Thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be Thankful unto Him, and Bless His name.” (Psalm 100:4). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Never underestimate the Power of LOVE ❤️!!! Surely, after trials, which is accepted as your Heavenly Father’s will, Blessings and growth will follow. (Psalm 30:5). Yesterday, shortly before noon, INEVITABLE CHANGE in leadership took place for the good of the United States of America. And at the same time it was reported the U.S. set a new daily coronavirus record of 120,000 cases. With this bitter sweet news, even now more than ever, “God will give you the Strength to endure the times ahead.” (Phil. 4:13 KJV). The enormous road ahead for the new

leadership can only be successful with the strength of the hand of God. Therefore, going forward you must Persevere with Patience through the difficulties they might face with the transition of power. We the People are now called into partnership with the Divine Leadership God has chosen to lead in the Healing process ahead. You are called to pray without ceasing with humble thanksgiving in you heart ❤️ as they begin the process of the long tedious journey of reversing thousands of years of unexceptionable brutal behavior to human souls. Children of God, going forward your success will depend in large part upon the passion that you bring to the work of your own life. When you are passionate about your life, your responsibilities and above all your FAITH, amazing things will happen. FAITH helps you succeed, it helps you see the Vision and Hope in the vision knowing that any Vision God calls you to do you will succeed if He is at the center of your life. Create a vision for yourself and the rest of your life while transformation is in motion. After surviving almost an entire year of unimaginable circumstances, it is quite evident that God did not create you for a life of mediocrity. He created you for far greater things. However, your life's work must focus on His work. You must become enthusiastic about your FAITH which draws you closer to God. Your President elect understands that "Our FAITH can move mountains. (Matt. 17:20 KJV). Your spirit will level-up to your vision and give you energy and Hope while the world 🌎 is trying to figure out how to repair the damage. Your purpose is about to meet up with your destiny because you have the supernatural power of God in you. God IS the Great Equalizer in the world. To Trust in anyone or anything other than God would be foolish at this point. (2 Cor. 5:10 KJV). Transformation starts with God, and it starts in the silent center of a Humble Human Grateful Heart❤️ YOURS!!! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: GROW IN THE SPIRIT
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
11/15/20

THANK YOU Spirit of the Living God for this Beautiful Day! "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: He hath made everything Beautiful in His time: also He hath set the world in there heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." (Ecc. 3:1,11). My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, it is time to see things from God's perspective. Your times is in His hands! Each one of your lives have an appointed life span and life expectancy. By now you should know, ONLY GOD KNOWS when, how long, how significant, and what the measure of your life experience will be. Today, you are the living evidence that you are a part of specific plans your Heavenly Father have for your life. And His Word says that they are plans to prosper you and give you a future and an expected end. (Jer. 29:11). Therefore, you have a responsibility to fulfill, and that responsibility is to invest quality time in understanding what it means to Grow in the Spirit. Some opportunities in the world only come around once in a lifetime. But the opportunity to Grow in the Spirit is always available until the end of your life. Now with the spiking of the number of cases of the Coronavirus in the U.S. and around the world, it appears things will slow down even more. This is your Golden Opportunity to invest in the Divine Plans that God have for the rest of your life. For starters, you don't need money, TIME is the only contribution. And right now, TIME is on your side given the fact that the World 🌎 is now moving in slow motion! Now, the Power of the Holy Spirit is calling you to prepare yourself because The LORD who is your Divine Shepherd (Psalm 23) says, your cup will now runneth over with Blessings and Surely Goodness and Mercy

will follow you all the days of your life. Children of God, “The true children of God are those who let God’s Spirit lead them.” (Roman 8:14 NCV). To Grow and mature in the Spirit you must CONTINUE to spend QUALITY FOCUSED TIME praying 🙏 and studying 📖 The Word! My Beloved, my prayer for you, “I ask the Father in his great glory to give you the power to be strong inwardly through His Spirit. I pray that Christ will live in your hearts 💞 by FAITH and that your life will be strong in LOVE and be built on LOVE. And I pray that you and all of God’s holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ’s LOVE, how wide and how long and how high and how deep that LOVE is. Christ’s LOVE is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that LOVE. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19 NCV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!
Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

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THE WORD:  LOVE IS PATIENT AND BRINGS JOY!!!
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
11/22/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful New Day! “And now these three remain: Faith, Hope and Love, but the greatest of these is LOVE. (1 Cor. 13:13). Amen!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, GOD IS LOVE ❤️ and LOVE IS PATIENT! You are an integral and vital part of God’s creation. You were created in His image and likeness, even though you may not yet be fully aware of your spiritual heritage. You are worthy of the best in life, as heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. (Rom. 8:17). You are worthy of success, you are worthy of happiness, of enjoyment of every life experience and you are worthy of pleasurable moments every day. Now that you have been informed, in this realization, you will grow stronger, more peaceful, more stable, more understanding, and above all, more LOVING! Beloved children of God, nothing stands between you and your Ultimate Good! NOW, accept His promise that was given to you through the words of Jesus Christ: “...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10). As the world 🌍 is being challenged during the transformation and what it is going to take to Heal the Land, you must continue to meditate on all nine (9) characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control. Fruit is always a healthier choice in your daily diet, and the Fruit of the Spirit will nurture you and help you learn more about yourself, how to relate to others and most importantly help you to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be in Christ. (Gal.5:22-25). The focus today is on LOVE, PATIENCE & JOY to sustain you while God is working all things out according to His Divine Plan. Yes, it appears, because of the spike in the cases of the coronavirus and the anticipated increase over the holidays, there will probably be some shutdowns again. But be confident that all things are working out for the Good for those who Love ❤️ God as well as for those who don’t because LOVE is PATIENT and LOVE ❤️ is KIND TO ALL. Beloved children of God, moment by moment, let Divine Love, Wisdom, Peace and Joy be the inner controlling power of your actions, your reactions, your words, and your feelings. Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD:  JOY ON THE JOURNEY
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
11/29/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful Day and Season of JOY and THANKSGIVING! "... And everlasting JOY shall be upon their head:  they shall obtain gladness and JOY; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (Isa. 51:11 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, JOY is your gift from God and it is not dependent on what occurred ten years ago, a month ago, yesterday or last night. (2 Tim. 1:6 KJV) commands that you "... Stir up the gifts of God which is in thee." JOY belongs to you, whether you know it or not. When you are filled with JOY you are at one with the universe, and the harmony and rhythm of God fills and inspires you. JOY is your Divine birthright and a life of abundance is your inheritance! Children of God, be mindful, it is going to take time and patience for the outworking of the challenges you are still facing in this uphill battle with the pandemic. However, "The JOY of the LORD is your strength. (Neh. 8:11 KJV). You have entered a season of Comfort and JOY, therefore, sing 🎤🎶 for the JOY of knowing that you are a spiritual being, immortal, indestructible, changeless, and perfect. Make no mistake about what I am saying: IT'S THE GOD IN YOU!!! NOW, TAP INTO IT... No matter how big or little Faith you seem to have, God Loves ❤️you! You are called to be prepared as your future unfolds in front of you. You don't have to see the path to know it's there, your FAITH will handle that. Just remember to put one foot in front of the other. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, "FAITH is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase." During this time of transition in the world 🌎 you must live in your truth. Your perception is your reality, so get creative with the rest of your life. Remember your roots, where you came from will open your mind to the path of possibilities of where you can go. Your ancestors paid a big price, their LIVES! Even with the onset of another possible shutdown, DO NOT let the setback of this pandemic hold you back. Every strike brings you closer to your next home run! Beloved, Children of God, In the midst of it all, JOY ON THE JOURNEY makes it clear that God wants to fulfill His purpose in you. You are a tribe with a promised inheritance. According to Ephesians 1:11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." It's not to late to get this thing called Life right, but you must have a SINGULAR FOCUSED FAITH. Just look back over what God brought you through over the last 9 months, you are Stronger, Wiser, and So Much Better in spite of the pandemic. Remember, God takes Ordinary people and do Extraordinary things. There is more to you than you can imagine, The UNIMAGINABLE YOU!!! Now serve the VISION in you with JOY, THANKSGIVING and PEACE that has been given to you from the POWER of your Heavenly Father! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD:  THE GIFT OF WISDOM
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
12/6/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 HEAVENLY FATHER for this Wonderful New Day and for Your Wisdom, Knowledge and Understanding! “But it is the spirit in a person, that breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding. (Job 32:8 NIV). Beloved Brothers and Sisters, God’s Wisdom can be a light to guide your steps. Wisdom is knowledge guided by insight and understanding. Reverence for God is the source of all Wisdom. (Prov. 9:10 KJV). Reverence is a feeling of deep respect and awe which you as believers are to show towards God. (Lev. 18:30 KJV). The quality of your life and the direction of you FAITH will be determined by whether God’s Word will be a bright spotlight that guides your path everyday. Therefore, the decision to study the Bible or not is your and yours alone. But make no mistake, how you choose to use your Bible will have a profound impact on you and your loved ones. The more you choose to use and gain Wisdom about the Bible, the more God will use you. God’s Word can be a roadmap to a place of righteousness and abundance. Moving forward in this time of uncontrollable life changes, it is important to establish priorities for you life. God’s words of Wisdom must be explored and meditated on to be able to walk confidently in the footsteps of God’s only begotten Son, JESUS. What better season than now, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, to start to deeply understand
the significance and Divine Blessing of the birth of Jesus for all humanity, especially your own personal life blessings! You will begin to gain Wisdom and your spiritual understanding will grow daily as you acknowledge the indwelling Spirit of God, and more importantly, how His Spirit within you gives you Wisdom and direction. The more you understand yourself and the power of God within you, the more Peace, Wisdom, Love and Joy you are able to express constructively and positively towards others on this journey. According to the COVID Tracking project, 1 Million new coronavirus cases have been added to the U.S. total in only 5 days! THE BATTLE IS NOT OVER YET! And the battle is still the LORDS! However, through the Spirit within, you can meet any difficulty and have the Wisdom to overcome it. Spiritual Wisdom and understanding is a body healer, as well as a mind and emotion healer, but you must begin to understand that you are one with God and begin to live, and move and have your being in Him! (Act 17:28). Then you will find that your spiritual Wisdom and understanding grows daily as you acknowledge the indwelling Spirit of God. Amen 🙏🏾!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD:  ENDLESS LOVE ❤️ 🎶
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
12/13/20

THANK YOU 🙏🏾 HEAVENLY FATHER for Your LOVE ❤️and the Gift of a New Day! “...Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting LOVE; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”(Jer. 31:3 KJV). Amen 🙏🏾!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, LOVE ❤️ is the supreme spiritual gift! Everyday you receive a precious gift from God! LIFE OUT LOUD (LOL)!!! And the gift comes with a promise of, “Life more abundantly.” (John 10:10 KJV). Your life is a priceless opportunity, a gift of unforeseen worth. In spiritual truth, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who LOVE ❤️ Him. (1 Cor. 2:9 NLT). And not only that, but God’s mercies are abundant (1 Pet. 1:3) and fresh every morning. (Lam. 3:22-23). Children of God, The Word today is that even in these challenging and uncertain times, God will work miracles in your life if you TRUST Him with everything you have and everything you are. When you do, you will experience the miraculous results of His ENDLESS LOVE ❤️ and His awesome power. Then you can live in LOVE with the understanding that all things are possible if you only BELIEVE! But, you must be willing to

place God at the center of your will and pray that His Will be done on earth 🌍 as it is in Heaven. Every facet of Life in the center of God's Will will take on new value and meaning and purpose. Then you will awaken to a new understanding of what it means to be a channel of God's presence and power. Your Faith and prayers can move God, then God will move the mountains ⛰in miraculous ways that you never thought possible. "But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. (Matt. 19:26 KJV). With your Faith and prayers at the center of God's Will, you are then turning yourself over to the higher thoughts and ways of God and the presence and power of God's LOVE ❤️ that is within you always. You must always stay mindful of the strength of God and that His strength is made perfect in your mortal-appearance, limited-looking self weakness. The perfect solution to every problem comes from God. Your part is to consistently, regularly and FAITHFULLY practice giving God full control of your life. He is a Limitless God working Miracles with Loving-kindness especially in the affairs of His children who He LOVES ❤️ so deeply. Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: REJOICE, PRAISE, WORSHIP
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
12/20/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful New Day! "I rejoice in you. (Psalm 31:1 JKV). I will praise your name with a song 🎶, and I will magnify you with thanksgiving. (Psalm 69:30 KJV). While I live, will praise you Father."(Psalm 146:2). Amen!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, God has a wonderful plan and purpose for your life today and until eternity. And if for no other reason, this Good New should bring you Joy and make you wanna holla and throw up both of your hands 🙌 and say Thank You LORD 🙏!!! All of humanity is engaged in some form of worship. The question is not whether we worship, but what we worship? Wise men and women choose to worship God. When you do, you are Blessed with an abundance of Joy and Peace beyond measure. To maintain Peace you must be consistent not only in prayer that will certainly revolutionize your life, but also in worship that will assist to sustain the Power of a Peaceful mind. And to operate in God's Will you must have a willing mind and a perfect heart ❤️. Children of God, you have every reason to make a joyful noise unto the LORD and serve the LORD with gladness and come before his presence with singing. (Psalms 100:1-2 KJV). You have so much more to be thankful for than you ever acknowledge. Your Joy and Rejoicing is a result of God's many Blessings. Make no mistake, God inhabits the praises of His people. This means that God accepts your praises and dwells in the midst of where praise is celebrated. (Psalms 22:3). Children of God, you have been given so much of LIFE and for that alone you should make thanksgiving a habit and a daily part of your routine. Although God's gifts are to numerous to count, but you should attempt to count them anyhow. By speaking and singing 🎶 words of thanksgiving and praise, you honor the Father and you protect your heart ❤️ against ingratitude. All God wants is a heartfelt thanksgiving and praise throughout the day and throughout eternity. When you fail to worship God, for whatever reason, you forfeit the spiritual gifts that He intends for you. When you worship God faithfully and fervently, passionately and with enthusiasm, you are Blessed. Beloved, you do not have to wait until Christmas to celebrate. You owe your Heavenly Father everything, including your eternal PRAISE and WORSHIP, start

right NOW! HALLELUJAH is the Highest Praise!!! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING NEXT YEAR?
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
12/27/20

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful New Day and assuring your children a future of Glory! "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectations is from Him."(Psalm 62:5). Amen 🙏!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, What are your expectations for the New Year and what are you willing to commit to Today? It has been said, you can't become what you can't imagine today! God has already set the stage of your Life for 2021. The stages of life is set in your mind. If you can think it, you can achieve it in God's Strength. (Phil. 4:13 KJV). Your part is to stay in constant communication with God to better understand and be clear about the good plans He has prepared on this next leg of the journey of your Life. (Jer. 29:11 KJV). One thing for sure, God is calling you to have a new outlook on life in the New Year and to realize that each new day is a new beginning, a day to rise up and walk in a new consciousness of Life. Today is your day and everyday in the New Year is an opportunity to take hold of New Faith and Courage, new wisdom, new love ❤️ new Joy and happiness. What will be significant to your outcomes is FAITH in your own ability and the courage to solve your own problems and the Wisdom to leave the rest up to God. Surely, God is expecting some input and action on your part in the plan as well as to hear what you are willing to sacrifice for the discovery of your Ultimate Good Life. Are you willing to learn what it means to wait on the LORD and be of good courage in order to gain Strength, Perspective and Peace while waiting? (Psalm 27:14 KJV). Let's be clear, My Beloved, waiting will sometimes challenge your patience and endurance in the process. Sons and Daughters of God, It is at this time you must stay focused and turn your thoughts and prayers to Christ. Prayer 🙏 is a simple, normal activity of the mind and heart ❤️ of everyone who desires to be a better person, to understand Life and living, and to live more richly. There is a POWER IN PRAYER that changes things. This is your day and upcoming year to see evidence and results. Holding on to the Word of God (WOD) will help your focus remain in balance, eliminate distractions and sustain a positive perspective. God is still calling you each day to do something bigger than yourself. However you cannot do it without Him. You got to be involved with God as a partner in crime. Your Life is the target victim and you are the victim of your own Life destiny. God wants to fulfill His purpose in your Life, but you have to be available with expectations and ready to participate. You must write the vision and make it plain... For the vision is yet for an appointed time... though it tarry, WAIT FOR IT because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Hab. 2:2-3 KJV). Expect your Absolute Best to show up at God's appointed time. Your perception is your reality, so get creative with the rest of your Life... and choose this day who you will serve (Jos. 24:15 KJV). Then it will be easy to stay on track when you choose never to quit. You are worth more than what you appear to be right now. You are worth fighting for your own Best Life. Your expectations are linked to your Faith. The Faith you lay hold of and expect will widen you horizons. There is a Divine Plan at work in your Life. BELIEVE IT and watch God at work. The more fully you accept God's gift of Life more abundantly today, the more fully you can Expect the Wonderful Life God has in store for you Next Year! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: A NEW DAY, A NEW OPPORTUNITY
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
1/3/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this New Day and a New Opportunity to get this thing called Life right! “You will show me the path of Life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”(Psalm 16:11 NKJV). Amen 🙏!!! My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, This morning as the sun ☀️ rose in the east, you welcomed a New Day, one that you have never seen before nor will you ever see again. A New Day that is filled to the brim with opportunities, with possibilities and with God. Everyday you are Blessed to live with a new opportunity to seek the Divine Purpose God has in mind for your life. No matter how the day unfolds, good or challenging, God has a direction for your life, a Divine calling, and a path along which He intends to lead you each New Day. Life IS a mystery, and discovering God’s unfolding purpose for your life is an ongoing process. This process is guided by the teachings of God’s Holy Word that you must meditate on daily, and according to Joshua 1:8, “...then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success”. Sons and Daughters of God, Success is when preparation meets opportunity. You have the qualities, characteristics and inherent parts of Becoming the Greatness that God has planned for your Life. However, you must plan to prepare yourself for the task of reaching your 💯!!! The Word of God strengthens and encourages you, raising your sight from your “light and momentary troubles” to God’s eternal perspective that outweighs them all. (2 Cor. 4:17 KJV). Everyday is a new opportunity to prepare yourself spiritually, mentally and morally for the changes that are ahead. This is about a new foundation on which to continue to build your Life and your Faith. God is looking for a deeper personal connection with you. This IS NOT about leaving all of the Year 2020 behind, because surely, some of the good works that God has begun in you continued in spite of the devastating effects of the pandemic. Children of God, you will be involved in conflict with evil powers and even with Satan himself, things far beyond your control, if you earnestly undertake to possess all that God has promised to you on this earth 🌍!!! God is not only a master multitasker who can handle warfare and Blessings at the same time, He is also the Great equalizer. There is an Ultimate Goodness of God’s plans for your life. Face the future with certainty, “Being confident of this very thing, that which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”(Phil. 1:6 KJV). Beloved, enjoy the rhythm 🎶 of Life lived close to God and follow Him wherever He leads without worrying about how it will all turn out. Enjoy the mystery of it all, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of POWER, and of LOVE ❤️ and a SOUND MIND. (2 Tim. 1:7 KJV). Think of your Life and each New Day as an adventure, with God as your Guide and Companion and LIVE IN THE NOW with Him concentrating on staying in step with Him each New Day! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Evening CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: DIVINE PROTECTION AND POWER
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook

1/10/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful Evening and for Your Goodness and Mercy that will follow us all the days of our Life. “Live under the protection of God Most High and stay in the shadow of God.” (Psalm 91:1 CEV). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, God never stops fighting your battles for you, and will Protect you at all times. Even when the world 🌎 seems dark, your future is bright for those who look to the Son. Your future lies before you, NOT behind you. Each day you wake up no matter what is going on in the world, your future is still before you (in motion, moving, unstoppable), with possibilities of endeavors and successes undreamed of before. God’s LOVE ❤️ for you will always outshine hate. What was televised and what you witnessed on Wednesday was not a revolution but an insurrection, a mob attack on the democracy of America 🇺🇸! A strategic plan carried out by the evil doings of the President and his evil supporters to take control of the status-quo. The Bible (2 Tim. 3:1) makes it unmistakably clear that in the last days the world will be filled with difficulties, uncontrollable, unpredictable and dangerous situations. However, “...Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle IS NOT yours, but God’s. (2 Chr. 20:15 KJV). You are to be thankful that we have a God who is fighting the dual battle of systemic racial injustices and the novel Coronavirus that is performing true to its predictions. Sons and Daughters of God, you may have been shaken by the events of this past week, but STILL YOUR SPIRIT STANDS STRONG. STILL YOU RISE. Don’t minimize your talents or potential, because evil will always present distractions. Make no mistake, the soul of America is being searched publicly, and will continue over and over again until the oppressor level up to the oppressed with a REAL transparent, strategic, measurable action plan to dismantle injustices. This season has been an abrupt interruption from God. Again, God has brought you into this season to prosper you in one way or another. However, your life is on you to figure out where you are going with it now with God’s guidance and protection. Again, Life happens at the speed of your decision to change. You must not sit around and wait for the world 🌎 to figure out the significance of your existence. You do have a part in it other than the victim. It requires action on your part. Your Life is on you to figure out how you choose to continue to exist in this world. You must learn spiritual principles for God to respond. (2 Peter 3:18 KJV). Spiritual Principals are truths or creeds that you choose to live by. They are universal concepts that help you to become a better person. It must be your personal priority to “Grow in grace and knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.” You must get serious about your spiritual maturity and how crucial it is to your continued existence in the world. According to 2 Peter 1:3, “His Divine Power has given us everything we need for a Godly life.” This battle is far from over, the changes have just hit the surface and God will have the final say. How will you stand personally in unity with the core message that every life is sacred. Beloved, Peace will prevail and LOVE ❤️ will conquer hate. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE! 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: DILIGENTLY SEEK GOD AND LET THE WORD DO THE WORK
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
1/17/21

THANK YOU 🙏 HEAVENLY FATHER for this Wonderful New Day, and THANK YOU for your immeasurable LOVE ❤️ which is the most excellent way.” (1 Cor. 12:31 KJV). Amen 🙏!!!Beloved Brothers and Sisters, LOVE ❤️ IS going to win this battle because, God is LOVE ❤️and, “...nothing

is too hard for God." (Genesis 18:14 KJV). However, you must keep your guard up as a warrior in the Spirit. You must, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph. 6:1-24 KJV) Mastering "... The Sword ⚔ of the Spirit" which is the Word of God. (v. 17). The warrior's greatest resource is to PRAY! "Praying always with all prayer 🙏 and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance (v. 18). Children of God, supplication is a petition, an earnest prayer or request holding God to His promises. "And being fully persuaded that, what He has promised, He was able to perform." (Rom. 4:21 KJV). Praying with supplication and thanksgiving is an antidote to anxiety. No matter how strong you may appear to be in this crisis, you and the whole world 🌎 have suffered with some form of anxiety. It's the nature of the beast. Beloved, You are still in the midst of this great crisis, and like never before, YOU MUST "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thes. 5:17 KJV). It is when you let your guard down that the success of the enemy gains leverage and the impact is the greatest. Fear is one of the strongest weapons of the enemy. However, "For God hath not given you the spirit of fear, but of POWER, LOVE and a SOUND MIND." (1 Tim. 1:7 KJV). If fear can control your mind, it can control your actions. Fear has tournament. You witnessed this one week ago! And we know that God's perfect LOVE ❤️ will cast out all fear. (1 John 4:18 KJV). Beloved, The measure of your success in any situation, circumstance, or crisis is how you diligently seek God and persevere in His Word. To be diligent determines how deeply you ponder and how consistently and actively you seek knowledge to enhance and support your diligence. Everyday you must be consistent in effort with persevering attention in seeking God. The hand of the diligent will rule. (Prov. 12:24 KJV). God rewards those who diligently seek Him. "But without FAITH it it impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarded of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6 KJV). In believing, you will receive the things you desire when you pray." (Mark 11:24 KJV). Then with total submission to the strength of God, you will be able to endure and overcome in this and any future situations. "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH." ( 1 John 5:4 KJV). In the midst of this Great Miracle that is about to take place, you must know who you are in God's strength. "And God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul." (Acts 19:11 KJV). As long as your purpose has not been fulfilled, you shall live and not die in this situation. It is the Power and Strength of God that gives you the ability to fulfill your Divine purpose. God's special reward is promised to those who recognize their spiritual need. (Matt. 5:3 KJV). At the end of this crisis, you will have a new testimony, and you will be able to speak confidently about the faithfulness of your God and about the Power of God, the same Miracle Working Power that raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore, "...we may place ultimate trust and confidence in Christ to finish this battle." (John 6:35-37 KJV)). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: PEACE IN THE MIDST OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
1/24/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Magnificent New Day and THANK YOU 🙏 for the PEACE of God which passes all understanding. (Phil. 4:7 KJV). Beloved Brothers and Sisters, All of God's people are urged to pursue PEACE and to live Peaceably with each other. Roman 12:18 tells you, "If it is possible as far as it depends on you, live at PEACE with everyone." PEACE is harmony and accord brought about by cordial relationships. In order to live in harmony with others as the new

American 🇺🇸 chapter unfolds, specifically with regard to the deep racial division in the world 🌎, and the mutation of the coronavirus, you will need the PEACE of God to ever obtain this harmony. Our new President has been truthful and transparent about what lies ahead. “Some things will get worst before they get better.” Therefore, until your mind is at PEACE with God your Creator (Gen. 1:1) who is Sovereign (In control of the universe) the uphill battle will continue to look the same in some cases. In the midst of life’s storms, you need the gift of God’s PEACE. The next leg of the journey will require you to Trust with a Peace of mind and not to worry as events unfold. Peace is a wonderful antidote to worries. This PEACE is not only in good circumstances of life, but it is a deep abiding, inner tranquility in all kinds of life circumstances. Children of God, circumstances should never dictate nor produce a lack of PEACE. Because your Heavenly Father will keep you in perfect PEACE when you keep your mind stayed on Him. This is a sign of who you Trust. (Isa. 26:3 KJV). To have the PEACE of God ruling in your mind and spirit you must put to practice some of the principles of Peace. It’s not all on the Spirit, you have a role to play as well in developing PEACE. If you begin to take action to define your purpose, PEACE will guide you and you will experience PEACE as your action becomes a habit. Then your habit will change your character one way or another and your character will produce and lead you into your destiny. PEACE can then come into your heart ❤️ by letting it rule your mind and actions. This was the PEACE of mind, heart ❤️, and character which Jesus always exhibited in His Life on this earth. PEACE comes from knowing Jesus, and that in all He went through was for your soul to be at PEACE. “Now the LORD of PEACE Himself give you PEACE always by all means. The LORD be with you all.” (2 Thess. 2:16KJV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of Morning CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: TRUST THE PROCESS AND BE PATIENT
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
1/31/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Wonderful Day! “And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the LORD and may please Him in every way and come to know Him better: BEARING FRUIT in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that YOU may have great endurance and PATIENCE.” (Col. 1:10-11). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, During life’s most difficult days, your Heavenly Father reminds Steadfast which means, PERSISTENCE and PATIENCE. God is the author of PATIENCE (Rom. 15:5 KJV), and Christ is its perfect model (2 Thess. 3:5 KJV). And as believers, you are urged to labor with Patience in the service of Christ. (1 Thess. 5:14 KJV). Persistence is the ability to endure through difficult circumstances. Sons and Daughters of God, in these difficult moments you must develop a more PATIENT ATTITUDE at all times, and through patience you will inherit the promises of God. (Heb. 6:12 KJV). God promises TO ALWAYS BE WITH YOU EVEN UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD 🌎 (Matt. 28:20 KJV); to PROTECT you (2 Thess. 3:3 KJV); to be your STRENGTH (Ps. 46:1 KJV); to ANSWER you (Prov. 16:1KJV); to PROVIDE for you (Phil. 4:19 KJV); to give you PEACE (Isa. 26:3 KJV); and above all things, to ALWAYS LOVE ❤️ YOU (Jer. 31:3). It is a process to dismantle 401 years of slavery as well as it a process for your political leaders and medical scientists to whistle with and defeat an invisible disease 🦠! However, in God’s own time and according to His Master Plan, He will Heal the Land. A Positive Attitude makes a big difference in the way you Patiently wait for the Mighty move of God. He will give you Strength to Trust the Process with all of your heart ❤️ and to Follow His Will. However, you

must EXAMINE YOUR ATTITUDE because your thoughts becomes your ATTITUDE. God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons. PATIENCE is a Life long Lesson and you will find yourself struggling in the process of learning the lesson because it is something that you will have to forever work on. However, The benefits of PATIENCE are more than worth the process and pain, since the only way to develop it is with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit within you. WHAT A BENEFIT!!!!Beloved, The Lesson is, if you let PATIENCE have its perfect work in your Life, according to His Word, you will be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:4 KJV); 2 Peter 3:9 tells you, “The LORD is not slow in doing what He promised, the way some people understand slowness, But God is being PATIENT with you. He does not want anyone to be lost, but He wants all people to change their Hearts ❤️ and lives. The promise is your Future. It’s a Promissory Note that belongs to your life! God’s Words gives you the Faith and confidence to hold onto the certainty that His Promises will surely be fulfilled. (Habakkuk 2:3 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Evening CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: EMBRACE CHANGE WITH JOY! ITS INEVITABLE!!!
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
2/7/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for keeping us Safe in the midst of this Beautiful Winter Evening! “...Count it all JOY when ye fall into various trials; Knowing this, that the trying of your Faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:2-4 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Being JOYFUL is not dependent upon circumstances! There is a natural JOY in the beauty of music and nature, and there is a human JOY in delightful relationships. In this uncertain time of Life, the most important relationship you must focus on is the one you have with the Holy Spirit! Relationships takes time and effort, however to grow in intimacy with God will teach you how to personally encounter Him through His indwelling Spirit. Your personal relationship with the Spirit of God is shaped by the thoughts and intent of your heart ❤️!!! Life is a process and your purpose in Life is defined in the process. However, your spiritual relationship with your Heavenly Father reveals the many lessons and course of action you will face in the process of Life. Change is the one thing in the process that is inevitable and it will certainly test your Faith and how you achieve your true purpose. Next month will mark one year of the life-changing, novel Coronavirus that altered the world’s 🌎 lifestyle in an unimaginable way resulting in over 400K deaths. This devastating event proved that Self-effort alone will never be the norm. You must yield, change and surrender to the Divine Spirit that works in you when you are willing to yield to His Will. Children of God, those of you who surrender and give up resisting the fact that God is Sovereign (In Control) will then find meaning that only you and God will understand. Sons and Daughters of God, ITS PERSONAL!!! Change is coming in each new day that you are Blessed with Life. Embrace it with JOY and you will find Strength to endure what your future holds. (Neh. 8:20 KJV). The changes God makes in the lives of Faithful followers far outweigh anything you might try to do in these uncertain times to improve your self-image, self-esteem or your self efficacy. Your value IS NOT determined by what you do or what you have, but simply on how you choose to continue to exist in relationship with God. Being in a focused personal relationship with God will guarantee that you will be able to handle any Change or Challenges, no matter what the size. You will find that the Creator of the universe stands always ready and always able to create a new sense of Wonder and JOY in you. What do you need to imagine as you prepare for each New Day of Change? Life is a one-of-kind gift from God. Christ is the secret, the source, the substance and

the center of all good and perfect gifts in your Life! EMBRACE HIM!!! Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights..."(James 1:17 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: LOVE ❤️ IN HIS PRESENCE
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
2/14/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for your LOVE ❤️ and the gift of a Wonderful New Day! "And now these three remain: Faith, Hope and Love. But the greatest of these is LOVE ❤️ (1 Cor. 13:13 KJV). Beloved Brothers and Sisters, On this day that the world 🌍 is celebrating LOVE ❤️, All your Heavenly Father wants from you is for you to open up your heart to Him. God will never leave you. He is always present, always Loving, always ready to protect your heart and fill it with His LOVE. The Bible's most clear definition of LOVE ❤️ can be found in 1 John 4:16, "GOD IS LOVE" and He is also the one who created Love. Nothing is more important than the time you spend with your Heavenly Father who is Love. It gives you an Inner Peace in your Heart when you experience the ever presence of your all Loving ❤️ God. Peace is your spiritual birthright and in quite times with God is where you can reveal matters of your heart and where you gain strength to Love others. The transforming Love of Jesus gives you courage to live courageously in a world where you may find yourself discouraged by the inevitable disappointments and tragedies that are occurring on a daily basis. Although your mind alone cannot fully comprehend and know God's plans and His thoughts, the one thing that your heart can comprehend, if you open it up, is His LOVE. Love changes the character of those who love. It is an overriding fact that God created you and commanded you to Love Him first and then your neighbor as you Love yourself. (Matt. 22:37-40 KJV). However, the quality of how you live out the commandments is predicated on how you spend quality time in His presence. When you are in the presence of God, your Heavenly Father, it removes you from distractions and you are able to hear more clearly and allows the broken places in you Heart ❤️ to surface and come to the light. Sons and Daughters of God, It is in this sacred space and time that God has your undivided attention for a predetermined amount of time for the sole purpose of expressing His Love for you. Children of God, LOVE ❤️ is calling you into His presence to feel His Loving Heart that is sufficient to meet all of your needs. Be mindful of this one thing, that your only real security comes from the LOVING HEART ❤️ OF GOD. John the Beloved, also known as the "Apostle of Love" reminds you that, "God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him may not be lost, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NCV). THAT'S REAL LOVE ❤️!!! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!! Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples❤️🎶!!! THE WORD: GOD WILL SHOW YOU THE PATH Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook 2/21/21 THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for the Gift of this Wonderful New Day! "You will show me the path a life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11 NKJV). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Every morning, as the sun rises in the east, you welcome a New Day, one that you have never seen before, nor will you ever see again, and a day that is filled to the top with opportunities, with possibilities and with God. From the moment you wake up until the moment you fall off to sleep at night you make countless decisions and the quality of those decisions determines the quality of your life. As you continue to live through the multiple crisis of this pandemic and the struggle to make since of the situation, your thoughts, your words, your priorities and action must be guarded by Self-Control. THE

STRUGGLE IS REAL and without realizing it, you can loose focus on the quality of your life and the direction of your Faith. These troubles come to prove that your Faith is pure. (1 Peter 1:7 NCV). When you exercise Self-Control you don't get distracted easily and you are able to make sustainable and focused efforts towards your goals which are more likely to result in success. Emotional Stability is one of the major qualities of Self-Control and in these unstable circumstances that you live in, having authority over your life and mental well being gives you the power to make sound decisions and discern the right way to respond in a peaceful manor. Sons and Daughters of God, you have the qualities, characteristics and inherent parts of becoming all that God purposed you to be and God will show you the path to your purpose and your success, but you must willing to follow Him and let Him lead you in the path of righteousness. No matter how uncertain life is living in this Pandemic, life is best lived on purpose and purpose like anything else begins in the heart ❤️ of God. Children of God you must continue to welcome God into your life daily to establish a genuine relationship with Him. Then He will continue to make His purposes known as you continue to Trust in Him with all your ❤️. (Proverb 3:5 KJV). Discovering God's unfolding purpose for your life is a daily Journey! Amen 🙏!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: TRUST GOD'S TIMING
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
2/28/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for the Blessing of this Magnificent New Day! "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under the Heaven." (Eccl. 3:1 NKJV). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Your times are in God's hands and He controls the timetable of your life. He has created a world 🌎 that unfolds according to His own timetable, NOT yours. THANK HEAVENS!!! The greatest choice you can make in your life is to deeply depend on God with an enthusiastic, hope-filled attitude while waiting on the mighty move of God that is soon to come. However, God won't force you to adopt a positive attitude. It is up to you to focus your thoughts and energies to think positive about His promise of blessings and opportunities even in a time when the world is struggling to heal from the deadly disease of the pandemic. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea (YES) and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20 KJV). If you don't control your thoughts, they most certainly will control you. Beloved, you must have a yielded heart ❤️ while waiting on God and move purposefully with Him letting Him direct your course one step-at-a-time. A grateful heart ❤️ protects you from negative thinking. Thankfulness allows you to see the abundance. "In everything give thanks for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess. 5:18 KJV). Children of God, you need to spend daily time with God for His purpose to be fulfilled. Your destiny depends on the time you spend with the LORD. To everything there is a season, and in 20 days Spring 2021 will show up without your permission. This is your season to see evidence and results regardless of the present circumstances of your Life. In every season, no matter the circumstances, you are still moving closer to God's perfect Vision and Will for your Life. (Jer. 29:11). And your purpose is linked to God's Vision. Therefore, you MUST make the time you spend with God your priority and watch how quickly He will move on your behalf. Your FAITH and PRAYERS will move God and God will move the Mountains ⛰️ in HIS TIME! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: JOY ON THE JOURNEY
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
3/7/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for a Magnificent New Day! “These things have I spoken to you, that my JOY might remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, No matter what has happened over this past year, this is a New Day, a New Hour, and a New Moment to take hold of JOY. JOY is your personal gift from God, and it is not dependent on what occurred ten years ago, a month ago, yesterday, or last night. JOY belongs to you, whether you know it or not. God is JOY. The earth 🌍, the other planets 🪐, the sun 🌞, and the stars ✨ move in harmonious Joyful rhythm. When you are filled with JOY you are at one with the universe, and the harmony and rhythm 🎶 of God will joyfully inspire you and give you PEACE. In these trying times, sometimes you may think you cannot get back into the swing of things and that you are out of step with success, wholeness, happiness or peace. In those moments, it is more important than ever that you realize that the gift of JOY is part of your inner essential nature that can be awakened. The Apostle Paul says, “...stir up the gift of God, which is in thee ...” (2 Tim. 1:6 KJV). Sons and Daughter of God, stir up your JOY with a song 🎶 of praise and prayer 🙏 of thanksgiving. Praise confuses the enemy!!! (2 Chronicles 20:22) reminds you, As soon as they began singing, the LORD confused the enemy camp. Praise is the connection between your prayer life and your standard with God. The power of praise in times of trouble is that HIS JOY rises up inside of you and covers you in HIS PEACE. Beloved, Children of God, you do not have to wait for some future time on your Journey to become aware of this inner JOY. You do not have to wait for it to come to you through some person, particular thing or accomplishment. DO NOT POSTPONE your JOY for another moment, just put a song 🎶 of JOY in your heart ❤️, this hour, this minute and sing 🎤 for the JOY of knowing that you are a child of the living God. (Rom. 9:26 KJV). A song 🎶 of JOY is your divine birthright, and a life abundant is your heritage. This JOY is the JOY that the world 🌍 can’t give you and the world can’t take it away! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!! ❤️🎶!!!

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Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
3/14/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for the Gift of a NEW DAY! ”Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.” (Psalm 89:15 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, When God gave you life, His Spirit within you empowered you to live beyond your natural ability and strength. Day by day, moment by moment God is revealing to you and guiding you on the path of your life! After 365 days of living through and surviving one of the deadliest disease in the history of humankind, your life is now a living testimony for future generations to know and understand that no matter what anyone may say of the impossibilities of healing, all things are possible with God. He promised to heal the land and all diseases. (Psalm 103:3 KJV). Sons and Daughters of God, the ways of God and His healing power transcends, which means,

His power rises above and goes beyond the limits of the world 🌎 as well as any of your own concepts. LET'S KEEP IT REAL, there should be no questions now about who is in absolute control of your life. NOT THE WORLD 🌎! NOT YOU! BUT GOD!!! The media is reporting that the scientists are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel in slowing down and controlling the virus and ultimately being Set Free of it. This is Good News, however, you shall be Set Free more speedily than you can imagine possible when you Persist in your Prayers 🙏 when you Insist upon your thoughts turning to God in Faith, when you hold fast to the Truth that everything is working for Good according to His purpose and perfect plan for your life. Children of God, Prayer is not for the purpose of changing God but to help you turn your innermost thoughts and feelings into the conditioned state of awareness that enables His Healing, Strengthening , Peace-making Presence to work through you. Beloved, the struggle is not over yet, but through this present experience of Life you are still growing and God is still unfolding the great potentials that are within you. Everything is working for your Good but you must continue to Trust in the LORD with all your heart ❤️ and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path. (Prov. 3:5-6 KJV). TRUST the process and outlive the experience! Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

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Top of the Morning CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶

THE WORD: TRUST THE FUTURE WITH GRATITUDE 🙏
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
3/21/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for the Blessing of A New Day! "Then the One seated on the throne said, "Look! I am making everything new." (Rev. 21:5 HCSB). Beloved Brothers and Sisters, To everything there is a season, and as of yesterday, you have officially entered into Spring 2021! THANK YOU 🙏 GOD! Last year this time, your Life changed, your circumstances changed, your opportunities changed, your responsibilities changed and your relationships changed, but the one thing that never changed was God's Mercy and Compassion that will never change. "They are new every morning: Great is His Faithfulness." (Lam. 3:22-23 KJV). God has promised that your Future is secure, yesterday ended last night, DONE, OVER, FINISHED, and no matter how long you must wait for change, God expects you to hold fast the profession of your FAITH without wavering or becoming weak while waiting. (Heb. 10:23 KJV). You must Trust the Future with unchanging Faithfulness in the LORD, because He who promises to never leave nor forsake you is Faithful to guide and deliver you to an expected end. The question still remains, WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING? What ever it is, just know that God's power has no limitations and that God will work miracles in your life if you TRUST Him with everything you have and everything you are. When you do, you will experience the miraculous result of His endless LOVE ❤️ and awesome power. Sons and Daughters of God, do you lack the FAITH that God can work miracles in your own life even while we are still in the midst of the Struggle. If so, it's time to reconsider. God is in the business of doing miraculous things. Never be afraid to ask Him for a miracle, when you don't you place limitations on God who has none. "...With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."(Matt. 19:26 KJV). Beloved, your Life and Future is a glorious gift from God. Thankfully, God never drifts away from you. He remains alway present, always steadfast, and ALWAYS LOVING ❤️ Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶!!!

Top of the Afternoon CAFE WORD Disciples ❤️🎶!!!

THE WORD: AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE 🙏
Rev. Sheila J. Campbell-Haugabrook
3/28/21

THANK YOU 🙏 Heavenly Father for this Amazing New Day! “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift that is too Wonderful for Words.” (2 Cor. 9:15 KJV) Amen 🙏!!! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Developing an attitude of gratitude is key to a Joyful and Satisfying Life. So ask yourself this question: “Am I grateful enough”? It is only with gratitude that Life becomes rich. If you don’t fill you life with gratitude you leave it vulnerable to be filled with all kinds of stuff, that is, you leave it susceptible to emotional attack or harm. With gratitude in your Heart ❤️ you can face your daily duties with perspective and power that only God can provide. You see God reads your Heart and gives you your desires, but be mindful, they will unfold according to His Perfect plan. (Prov. 16:9 KJV). As the newness of Life begins to unfold each day and the rush of your daily grind begins to occupy your mind, it is easy to lose sight of God and His daily Blessings. And when you forget to slow down and say “THANK YOU” to your Heavenly Father, you rob yourselves of His PRESENCE, His PEACE, and His JOY!!! Your task as Children of God is to praise God as many times as you possibly can each day. Praise confuses the enemy! YES, there is an enemy that desires to control your mind and your heart ❤️! Luke 22:31 records Jesus telling Peter, “Satan hath desire to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.” But God will not let that happen if you keep your mind stayed on Him, God will keep you in Perfect Peace. (Isa. 26:3 KJV). Beloved, you must say “THANK YOU” for the good and the not so good, there will always be challenges, that is how God gets your undivided attention. Every new level of Spiritual Maturity requires a greater level of Gratitude 🙏!!!Thankfulness lifts you up above all your circumstances. God does not have to give you a reason for what He does, however, you must understand, God knows exactly what He is doing because God is Sovereign, in Absolute Control. Sons and Daughters, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give THANKS 🙏 for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”(1 Thess. 5:16-18 KJV). Amen 🙏!!! TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!❤️🎶!!!

Appendix D
Questionnaire and Survey Responses to THE WORD Text Messages

I. Brief Description of Survey Instrument:

THE WORD questionnaire was designed as a simple survey to pose to a range of individuals from different age demographics. The survey was administered in the summer of 2021, after a year of sending out THE WORD text messages. It was sent by text message and reflects my interest in gathering feedback and adjusting my ministry accordingly. Respondents have been given an anonymous code number and their responses are organized by line item below for analysis.

II. Survey Instrument:

1. Do you feel like the Sunday Word has helped you?
2. If yes, please tell me how it has helped?
3. How has your relationship with God changed since receiving the Sunday Word?
4. Would you rather receive the Word via text or email?
5. Would you rather receive the Word via text than to go to a place of worship?
6. Is there another way you'd like to receive the Word? (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)

III. Responses

| **Respondent (coded)** | **Question 1:** Do you feel like the Sunday Word has helped you? |
|---|---|
| 01 | Yes… |
| 02 | Yes, the Sunday word helps me. |
| 03 | Yes, the Sunday Word helps in times when I need it most. |
| 04 | Yes |
| 05 | Receiving the weekly Sunday WORD From Rev. Sheila allowed me to have a sense of balance in a world that is currently extremely chaotic. |

| Respondent (coded) | **Question 2:** If yes, please tell me how it has helped? |
|---|---|
| 01 | The Word was uplifting and encouraging at times when I felt doubtful, or uncertain, it reminded me that God has a plan that is bigger than what we think, so lean not on your own understanding and to always trust God even through the most challenging times. |
| 02 | The Sunday Word is inspirational, an empowering way to begin the week. |
| 03 | It has given me a weekly Word while on the road as a Truck driver, especially during the pandemic. I can always go back to it any day or time in the week when needed. |
| 04 | Just adds more nuggets to my Sunday |
| 05 | The WORD allows me to digest and reflect over a period of time since it's always in my text messages and I can go back and reread it, if I need to. |

| Respondent (coded) | **Question 3:** How has your relationship with God changed since receiving the Sunday Word? |
|---|---|
| 01 | My relationship with God has grew stronger. |
| 02 | My relationship with God has been strengthened helps turn my focus on Him. |
| 03 | It has strengthen my relationship with God being able to hear His Word when I am unable to read the Bible. |
| 04 | Has not been affected but works as a reminder |
| 05 | It allows me to work on my relationship with God one on one without the pressure of other people's opinions and interpretations of what THEY think the word means instead of focusing on what the word means to me and my personal relationship to God. The word also helped me maintain a sense of normalcy and expectancy as I know it's always going to come every Sunday and it's something that just helps me keep track of the time in the current state. |

| Respondent (coded) | **Question 4:** Would you rather receive the Word via text or email? |
|---|---|
| 01 | I would rather receive the Word via text |
| 02 | I'd rather to receive it by text because I'm more likely to read it. |
| 03 | Text messaging is my primary source of communication and easy to access. |
| 04 | Text |

| | |
|---|---|
| 05 | Text. I'm grateful that I receive it and I look forward to it every time. |

| **Respondent (coded)** | **Question 5:** Would you rather receive the Word via text than to go to a place of worship? |
|---|---|
| 01 | I prefer to go to a place of worship and receive the Word via text |
| 02 | I would rather go to my place of worship. |
| 03 | I don't have an option of going to a house of worship since I am a Truck Driver, but I appreciate always having the Word at my fingertip. |
| 04 | I prefer a place of worship |
| 05 | No response |

| **Respondent (coded)** | **Question 6:** Is there another way you'd like to receive the Word? (Instagram, Facebook, etc.) |
|---|---|
| 01 | No |
| 02 | No |
| 03 | No, just text. |
| 04 | Not that I can think of |
| 05 | No response |

Appendix E
Morality Questionnaire and Responses

I. Brief Description of Survey Instrument:

The Morality Survey was designed as a simple questionnaire to pose to a range of individuals from different age demographics. The survey was administered in 2020 and was sent out by text message and email. Respondents were given an anonymous code number and their responses organized below for analysis.

II. Survey Instrument:

1. How do you define morality?
2. What determines your sense of morality?
3. Do you use God in any way to determine your morality?
4. If so, how?
5. Do you think others should use God to determine their morality?

III. Responses

| **Respondent (coded)** | **Question 1: How do you define morality?** |
|---|---|
| 01 | I define morality by a persons code of ethics and conduct, not what just a person says but rather there intent and the actions that follow subsequently. Having certain principles in place that therefore dictate your behavior and language when engaging others in society. |
| 02 | I define Morality as a high level of respect, compassion love treating a person in a way you would like to be treated valuing the gift of life. |
| 03 | I define morality as having integrity and treating people fair and equitably. |
| 04 | someone who cares about others. |
| 05 | Morality is the boundaries by which I treat people, act around people and when I am alone. It is how God has taught us to love and share. |
| 06 | I define morality as doing what's right and what may be wrong towards humanity. |
| 07 | Morality is the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are good (right) and those that are bad (wrong). |
| 08 | I think morality is what you personally believe is right and wrong. |
| 09 | I define morality as what would be right to do as a human. |
| 10 | I define morality as the state of having morals or principles that you use to determine right and wrong. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11 | Morality describes a person's values & beliefs concerning what is right vs. wrong. We all have our own belief system that helps determine how we operate in life whether it is accepted by others or not. |
| 12 | I say that having a sense of right(righteousness) versus wrong defines morality. |
| 13 | Wrong and right. A particular since of values and principles of actions |
| 14 | The core of the very person you are. The foundation of your character. Your unwavering belief system. |
| 15 | Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong. |
| 16 | Morality is how I consider others over myself. I believe in two standards of morals. There are worldly morals and Christian morals |
| 17 | Morality, in a nutshell it's knowing right from wrong. I do however believe the definition contradicts itself. We learn and are taught at a young age what morals are. Some adolecents are better at maintaining this than most adults are capable of. |
| 18 | I think morality is an individuals internal compass on right and wrong and it's influenced by their surroundings |
| 19 | Morality in my opinion is a compass to measure your attitude and convictions as it pertains to Humanity. |
| 20 | I define morality as the character traits and beliefs one has based on their upbringing, affiliations and whether or not they believe or serve God. |
| 21 | I define morality as conducting yourself in a way of love, a way that causes no harm to anyone else. |
| 22 | Morality is the understanding of good and bad or good and evil. Morality is the understanding within one's conscience that their decisions; either good or bad, have consequences that come from making such decisions. |
| 23 | I define morality as the lining of one's spirit, that substance that guides you when making those decisions that can affect the well being of others. It should be threaded in the fabric of everyone's character, but life quickly teaches you that it simply isn't. |
| 24 | Morality is your emotional compass that gauges when you've gone too far or not far enough. Morality defines hard boundaries. |
| 25 | I understand that morality is what is correct or right. Also following a rule of conduct. |
| 26 | No response |
| 27 | In my eyes morality is basically how you conduct yourself as a whole. Although that's a very vague answer, in my opinion your morals as a person are truly tested when no one is looking. That's when your true character is revealed, by if you decide to do the right thing when nobody is looking. |
| 28 | Morality is living and making decisions that are based on the Ten Commandments. |
| 29 | Knowing what is right or wrong or good and bad |

| | |
|---|---|
| 30 | The distinction between good and bad behavior. |
| 31 | Morality is the way in which I conduct myself in the world. |
| 32 | I base my morality on a personal system of values that are specifically held by my family (especially my mom) |
| 33 | Morality is behavior that can be viewed as judgement that can be considered as right or wrong in my opinion. |
| 34 | My understanding of right and wrong. |
| 35 | I define morality in of God's precepts and laws |
| 36 | As a millennial I define my morality by loosely basing it on of the biblical principles that I grew up listening to but felt largely unfair. For example, I conduct myself by the golden rule "Do unto others as you want them to have done to you." For a large majority of millennials, myself included we've watched as the church and other religions have been very exclusionary toward certain members and while watching this, it felt very hypocritical and seemingly against the word of God. How are we to love and treat each other with respect except for members of the LGBTQ+ community, or people of a different faith that's not in perfect alignment with Christianity or whatever religion we were brought up believing. If someone is Muslim being exclusionary of them because they follow the Quran instead of the Bible. It's splitting hairs, if we're all supposed to be nice to each other regardless of our differences why would we not be nice to someone because they're a homosexual or because they happen to be Mormon or Jewish? It seems foolish to believe that God would dislike someone because they're bisexual or because they read the Torah instead of the Bible. |
| 37 | Morality are principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior. |
| 38 | Morality is doing the right thing. |
| 39 | Morality is making a decision to choose to do that which is right or wrong and being at peace with your conscious in making good chooses. |
| 40 | The ability to distinguish between right and wrong |

| **Respondent (coded)** | **Question 2: What determines your sense of morality?** |
|---|---|
| 01 | God and my relationship deeply grounds my morality. |
| 02 | I define Morality as a high level of respect, compassion love treating a person in a way you would like to be treated valuing the gift of life. |
| 03 | God's principles determines my personal sense of morality His precepts and statutes. |
| 04 | Because that's what is defined as a good person |
| 05 | My spiritual upbringing has determined my sense of morality and how I have seen life lived before me. |
| 06 | I try to live the right way in life and do good during my walk with God. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 07 | No response |
| 08 | I think personally, I determine my morality through my religion and personal views. |
| 09 | What the people around me that have raised me do. |
| 10 | God's Word determines my sense of morality. |
| 11 | My upbringing and Christian beliefs have determined my sense of morality. I am Christian. I have been taught principles from the bible and based on these principles and how my mother raised me, it has molded me into the person I am today. As a result of what I have learned and been exposed to over the years, it has helped shaped my perspective on what is right. Also, I believe we are spirit beings and innately, most times we know right from wrong whether we understand the reasons for our actions or not. That is why, sometimes, a person can decide to do something that they may not really view as wrong, but they would still try to move in secret because deep down our spirit being knows it is wrong. |
| 12 | My sense of morality is determined by God's holy word... the Bible. |
| 13 | God my Conscience |
| 14 | Your morality can be cultivated by your religion, culture, upbringing and your life experiences. |
| 15 | My upbringing and my spiritual life |
| 16 | What determines my morality is whether I can perform an act against or for another human being and carry no guilt. |
| 17 | For me it's based on experiences and how I'm treated as a human being in society. Also taken into consideration laws, promises and principles. |
| 18 | Your upbringing, the people you associate with, media, societal views |
| 19 | God/Higher Self is the source of most of life's decisions and has helped when uncertainty arises. |
| 20 | My sense of morality is determined by my respect for God and what he says in the word. |
| 21 | My faith in a loving, merciful, giving God determines my sense of morality. Through Jesus Christ, I receive examples and by the Holy Spirit's guiding I learn how to be a moral being. The Holy Spirit in me does a work on the inside of me that produces fruit that is morally good; love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. |
| 22 | God and society. |
| 23 | My morality comes from God, from my heart, from being hurt (and seeing others hurt), from the natural part of me that wants to help, from my mother (and the absence of my father), from seeing evil devour things and people that are good. |
| 24 | My morality formed in alignment with the culture I belonged to a young person that included the influence of the Catholic church. It's also formed from the pain I've caused others and crossing the line |
| 25 | God's Word helps me know what is correct. |
| 26 | No response |

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| 27 | See response to Question 1 |
| 28 | Morality to me means living my life according to the Ten Commandments. I see the commandments as a compass for having Christian/Judeo standards |
| 29 | What you believe what is right or wrong or good or bad |
| 30 | My teachings of the word of God. |
| 31 | My sense of morality is determined by my upbringing, knowing what is right versus what is wrong and abiding by the rule of law. |
| 32 | My personal friends and family members assist in determining my sense of morality |
| 33 | Sense of Morality is based on what my parents have taught me and what I have learned according to my religious training, i.e. Catholicism and Episcopalism. |
| 34 | My upbringing which involves love, family, and religion. |
| 35 | The study of the Bible. |
| 36 | My belief system is one that goes against the traditional Church teachings in this way, I am kind to those who are kind to me. I try to be kind to those who may not be kind to me and I try not to judge things I don't understand. In this way my intention as well as the intention of my fellow peers is to try to leave people as unharmed in our interactions as possible. If I don't believe in what someone is telling me OR their beliefs are in direct contradiction with mine, I do not try to convince them to believe however if they attempt to use their beliefs to dictate, shame, or judge a way of life then I will correct them. This is usually the accepted way, if you don't believe in the way someone conducts their life, keep it to yourself it's not your job to "save" them or to convince them that your way of life is the correct way. |
| 37 | I know that at the end of each day God has the final say. So I try to live a life that would be pleasing to him. |
| 38 | God determines my sense of morality. |
| 39 | Based on everyday circumstances |
| 40 | How you are taught from caregivers and also by the natural intuition God has given us |

| Respondent (coded) | Question 3: Do you use God in any way to determine your morality? |
|---|---|
| 01 | Yes I believe my relationship with God dictates my morality. I believe that knowing the Holy Spirit alters my choices, thoughts, actions , and transforms my inner human condition , which is an evolving process on a daily basis, as God deals with me on an intimate level,<br>therefore creating a new person within me and changing the morality in which I lead with. |
| 02 | I define MORALITY by the word of God. |

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| 03 | I use Gods commands to govern how I approach daily interactions with individuals |
| 04 | Because I want to do it my self |
| 05 | Yes, I am guided by God's love and word to determine my morality. |
| 06 | Seeking God first before making any decisions big or small can help with guidance and your morality towards one another. |
| 07 | In everyday I give thanks to God for each and everything. |
| 08 | Yes |
| 09 | Yes somewhat, mainly other people but sometimes I do use god. |
| 10 | Yes, I believe all men use God's Word in some sense, whether they know it or not, because God promised to write His Word in man's hearts—I believe that's where we get our conscience. |
| 11 | Yes, I am Christian and as a Christian it is important to be obedient to the Word of God, so I make efforts to fulfill that in every way possible. I am not perfect, but I strive to live a life pleasing to God as His child. |
| 12 | Yes |
| 13 | Yes |
| 14 | Yes, You can't have one without the other.By knowing God influences your morality and shapes the very person you are. |
| 15 | Yes |
| 16 | Yes I do use God because my morals are based on spiritual principles. |
| 17 | Yes |
| 18 | For the most part I use what I've been taught growing up in church and my gut feels about a situation to morally guide me through life |
| 19 | can't say I use God to determine Morality, it's an internal knowing of right from wrong. |
| 20 | Yes |
| 21 | I think God can work in many ways to teach us |
| 22 | Yes |
| 23 | Yes |
| 24 | That's a difficult question. It brings into question the suffering and injustice around the world and how it continues. It's difficult to comprehend that reality and God in the context of morality as I understand it. |
| 25 | *No response* |
| 26 | Yes |
| 27 | Yes |
| 28 | Yes |
| 29 | Yes |
| 30 | Absolutely - The Ten Commandments |
| 31 | Yes, I use God in determining morality. |
| 32 | I personally use the teachings of God; I don't over zealously use "God" to solely determine my own morality |
| 33 | I use God to determine my understanding of morality. |

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| 34 | Yes |
| 35 | Are use God in all ways. |
| 36 | *No response* |
| 37 | Absolutely |
| 38 | Yes |
| 39 | Yes |
| 40 | Yes, as you learn more of him and his word |

| Respondent (coded) | Question 4: If so, how? |
|---|---|
| 01 | Yes I believe my relationship with God dictates my morality. I believe that knowing the Holy Spirit alters my choices, thoughts, actions , and transforms my inner human condition , which is an evolving process on a daily basis, as God deals with me on an intimate level, therefore creating a new person within me and changing the morality in which I lead with. |
| 02 | How I do that is by studying His word and applying to my life I. think everyone should apply the word of God to their life if everyone would to this it would be a more loving, caring, respectful world |
| 03 | When interacting with others my thinking is based on Jesus' teachings about loving one another and living according to that mandate as far as treating people with dignity respect and the love of God |
| 04 | No it's based on my own thinking |
| 05 | In how I respond to people, how I am sensitive to people and their needs, how I try not to let my anger get ahead of me - unless it is related to calling out evil. |
| 06 | If we take the time out and listen to the voice within (God). In order to deal with life's journeys we must listen to his whispers. His word will give us the right directions and corrections . You just have to believe it and receive all the gifts of guidance God has for us all. (I am still his work in progress) |
| 07 | I always praise God and I have faith in God. |
| 08 | I think God puts us in situations meant to test us and our morality. I also believe that God is okay and forgiving of mistakes and bad decisions. |
| 09 | I think about if something I did he would approve of being moral or not. |
| 10 | The Word says to acknowledge Him in all our ways...to do so I study to know what God says is right and wrong and I'm selective about my association, music, and entertainment. |
| 11 | Matthew 16: 24 says, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This scripture emphasizes the importance of being obedient as a follower of Christ. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 11: 26-28 states, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I |

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| | command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God…" Both scriptures emphasize obedience and to be obedient means to uphold standards according to the bible. The bible is a clear, written guide for how Christians should live their life and I choose to follow those standards. I am not perfect, none of us are. However, when it comes to morality, I think about what I believe is right and pleasing to God. |
| 12 | I use God in every way to describe, define and determine Morality. |
| 13 | The word has a answer for everything that goes on in our live and there's certain ways we should conduct ourselves. Best way is Gods way. |
| 14 | It helps create a moral compass for your life. Just the basis of how you treat people, love etc. |
| 15 | I ask God to help me to do what is right. |
| 16 | Fruits of the Spirit and most importantly the two commandments instructed by Jesus Christ. |
| 17 | Through prayer, meditation and journaling. Sometimes a reaction to a certain scenario can be risky if you take matters into your own hands. Morality comes into play on a religious stance when you refrain and turn from your own ways by asking the simple question WWJD? WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? |
| 18 | Pray, talk the situation out loud before making a decision |
| 19 | n/a |
| 20 | I try to handle situations in the manner that would please God based on his word and try to ask myself what would God want me to do when I am going through a test or difficult situation. I pray because I want to do what pleases God. |
| 21 | He uses other people, and challenges and even suffering to help us to understand His will and His ways. |
| 22 | I use God as an example of what having good morality is. Furthermore, I understand that God is love. Therefore, I consciencely put forth effort to make moral decisions that are based in love. Furthermore, my hope is that by my decisions they can become an example for others to examine and to lead them to the source of my morality, which is God. |
| 23 | God is definitely a part of MY morality, but religion has nothing to do with having morals. One can be an atheist and care about his fellow man. To me, however, God is a light that I want to shine on and through me so there's NO mistake as to where MY integrity comes from or who I belong to. |
| 24 | God can provide catharsis in a moral crisis. |
| 25 | No response |
| 26 | I just ask God to help me and guide me in making the right decision. |
| 27 | God is absolutely affiliated with morality because having good morals and believing in the Lord literally go hand and hand. I feel like the Lord watches us closely to see where our hearts are especially in regards to |

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| | how we conduct ourselves when we are alone as I said in the previous answer. |
| 28 | I use the Ten Commandments of the Bible,and other scriptures to help determine right from wrong |
| 29 | Through prayer and especially if you believe in your decision |
| 30 | The Ten Commandments. I also ask myself on occasions “what would Jesus do?” |
| 31 | God plays a big part in how I show up in the world on a day to day basis. God is my foundation. Morality is displayed in my character. |
| 32 | Respecting others and providing to those in need whenever possible are the few ways in which God influences my sense of morality |
| 33 | I apply my understanding of what is right versus wrong to my belief structure via behavior on a daily basis. |
| 34 | God gave us a set of rules to live by so the root of what is right and wrong, for me comes from those rules. |
| 35 | By studying God‘s word and showing myself as approve worker. |
| 36 | *No response* |
| 37 | I know that God is always watching even when you think no one is looking and that is what keeps me grounded to do the right thing in his eyes. |
| 38 | I use God’s Holy Spirit to determine my morality. |
| 39 | With God’s Biblical principles. |
| 40 | Studying his word and allowing the spirit to guide |

| **Respondent (coded)** | **Question 5: Do you think others should use God to determine their morality?** |
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| 01 | Yes I think if people let the Lord and his word guide them, it will give them a solid foundation and truth to base there morality on! It will teach them how to deal with situations, treat others , and make decisions with God in mind! |
| 02 | No response |
| 03 | Yes I do but I think people need to form a relationship with God to be governed by Gods principles |
| 04 | No, because it’s your choice if you want to be good |
| 05 | Mostly yes..I wonder about how God loves our different sexed individuals as God is Love. |
| 06 | No response |
| 07 | I believe that everyone should trust, believe and have faith in God. Have faith that God can bring you through all things. |
| 08 | I think morality is different to everyone. I think if you believe in God or whatever you believe in, will have an affect on how you view and determine what’s right and wrong. |
| 09 | Yes I think others should use God to determine their morality. |

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| 10 | Yes, because we are all God's creation and only He has the right to determine right and wrong for His people. |
| 11 | I believe the bible is a blueprint for life so yes, I think others should use God to determine their morality. However, I understand that not everyone believes in God or chooses to live a life according to God's standard. With that being said, everyone has the "right to choose" just as God gives us the right to choose and follow Him so I would never condemn anyone for doing otherwise. I would share my beliefs and try to help other see my point of view though. |
| 12 | If everyone used God to adhere to, abide by, and ascribe to His holy commandments, this world would be a better more beautiful place. His morality is a one way ticket to eternal life. |
| 13 | We all should and I think we all do. Just depends on are choices after the thoughts. But once we learn that our thoughts are not ours and our actions are based on our relationship with God. Everything falls in place. |
| 14 | Your spirituality brings a better sense to your humanity for the better . Your morality and your spirituality should be in a marriage. |
| 15 | Yes |
| 16 | I believe that the world would be a better place if everyone used God for the measuring stick. But I also believe in inclusiveness and if a person could use the lyrics from a Michael Jackson song "Man in the Mirror" moral standards could be reached. |
| 17 | Absolutely. It would save us from a lot of disappointments. |
| 18 | I believe others should decide for themselves if God should be used for their moral compass because if they do not believe or are forced I believe that would be immoral |
| 19 | I believe God-consciousness is a Personal/Individual decision, and should not be dictated by anyone but Self. |
| 20 | We all should base what we do or say on the word of God to please God, in order to determine and fulfill our God ordained purpose here on earth and because we all should be striving to someday get to heaven. |
| 21 | Yes, but God sometimes reveal Himself to people even before they know to call on His name. Ultimately, in God's timing those who have a desire to know Him, will come to understand His character, and His desire for us to be just like Him. He is a good God! |
| 22 | Yes. Others should use God to determine their morality. While there are various sects of religion and while there are various ideologies that determine one's perspective on how to conduct one's behavior; I attest that by having God as your center to determine your morality will bring about good reactions and good consequences for the decisions made by others. |
| 23 | It would AWESOME if everyone chose God to be the source of their moral compass because more vessels spreading His love in the world can only lead to great things, but that will never be so. Therefore, I've |

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| | grown appreciative of those with kind hearts and helpful spirits regardless of their personal beliefs. |
| 24 | It depends on their personal relationship with God |
| 25 | I do believe that if others used God's Word as a guide there may be less confusion knowing what is correct or right. One may also find God's Word is embedded in their own words and understanding. |
| 26 | Yes, we are human and our way of thinking and the way we make decisions are not always the best, so we need to ask God to help us make the right decision because His the only one who knows what's best for us. |
| 27 | I do believe that Others should at the very least Consider the Lord when they are determining their morality because Morality and integrity are very similar in my opinion. It all basically comes down to just being a good person and making sure that your heart is in a good place |
| 28 | Yes |
| 29 | Of course or whatever moral compass they use. |
| 30 | I hope everyone would use God to influence their morality. Seems many have forgotten the word of God these days. |
| 31 | I think everyone should do what they feel is best for them. I also think everyone would benefit from using God when determining morality. The world would be a better place. However, the way in which each individual determines morality is their own choice. |
| 32 | If others genuinely believe in God, then they should utilize more of his teaching and not necessarily over exaggerate the "true" meaning of God to most people. |
| 33 | I think others should use God to determine their morality if they believe in God as I do. If they do not believe, then they have to follow whatever guidance from the creators that they follow. |
| 34 | Not necessarily. When we do this, it almost "forces" God on people instead of allowing them to choose God. If I do what God put me here to do, I'll lead way more people to follow His guidelines rather than telling them "God said this is right and wrong!" |
| 35 | Yes |
| 36 | In summation we use the edges of what we've been taught in our traditional upbringing combined with therapy and a general sense of wanting others to be unharmed to guide our moral compass. |
| 37 | Yes, because people would make better choices. |
| 38 | I absolutely wish others would use God to determine their morality. |
| 39 | Yes, with God's Word. |
| 40 | Yes |

Appendix F
Music Sources with Scriptures

| Scripture Title | Scripture Verse | Scripture Text | Link to songs |
|---|---|---|---|
| A TIME TO HEAL | Jeremiah 30:17 | For I will restore health to you<br>And heal you of your wounds,' says the Lord,<br>'Because they called you an outcast saying:<br>"This is Zion;<br>No one seeks her." ' | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM_yX-GzrGY&list=PL09mZvHbL645hcFPB-hEmQU1ZL6CetO9Y |
| VICTORIOUS ME | Amos 3:8 | A lion has roared!<br>Who will not fear?<br>The Lord God has spoken!<br>Who can but prophesy? | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BC9T24OvEM |
| BREAKING LOOSE | Proverbs 18:10 | The name of the Lord is a strong tower;<br>The righteous run to it and are safe.<br>11The rich man's wealth is his strong city,<br>And like a high wall in his own esteem. | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCS-uSY4UbQ |
| FREE | John 10:10 | "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbyUPJooBfUU |
| FAITH OVER FRUSTRATION | Jeremiah 33:6 | Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. | https://youtu.be/U0TaADfUxPw |
| BEAUTIFULLY STRONG | Psalm 139:14 | I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;<br>Marvelous are Your works,<br>And that my soul knows very well. | https://youtu.be/5jpSk-OD0rs |
| TRUE JUSTICE | James 1:22 | 22But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. | https://youtu.be/cqX2LhLD6iE |
| SPIRITUALLY HUNGRY | Matthew 5:6 | 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. | https://youtu.be/H9CbsfDgB3c |
| NO JUDGING | John 7:24 | Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. | https://youtu.be/WyCPQvnHUlQ |
| LOVE SCARS | 1 Peter 4:8 | Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. | https://youtu.be/DyGNfbKkMVE |
| HELP! | Psalm 34:4 | I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. | https://youtu.be/iZ1mGINUew8 |
| IT'S BREAKING | Psalm 34:17 | When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears<br>and delivers them out of all their troubles | https://youtu.be/6knQtciACCs |
| COUNTING BLESSINGS | 2 Corinthians 9:15 | Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! | https://youtu.be/i58IH2D8sWQ |

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| ALL I NEED | Philippians 4:19 | And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. | https://youtu.be/-5gcX3sIoUs |
| STANDING | John 8:36 | So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. | https://youtu.be/MKM90u7pf3U |
| QUESTIONS | Matthew 7:7-8 | Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. | https://youtu.be/nzCIeNhw8oE |
| STILL! | Deuteronomy 10:17 | For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe | https://youtu.be/wDC7NeVfc30 |
| BELIEVE | Hebrews 11:11 | Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. | https://youtu.be/kmBQOfKep3U |
| ABUNDANT LIFE | John 10:10 | The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. | https://youtu.be/oGnsUe7ZpFc |
| HOLD ON | Psalm 34:18 | The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged. | https://youtu.be/opuncZaVJVo |
| SEEKING | Matthew 7:8 | For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. | https://youtu.be/WWGaUQfCfDM |
| WHERE ARE THEY | Isaiah 59:16 | He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. | https://youtu.be/jR6zmNtzLC0 |
| PRIORITY | Hosea 6:3 | Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, | https://youtu.be/1vsZFEVpFiA |
| AWESOME HEALER | Psalm 103:2-3 | Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, | https://youtu.be/5IfVbmf9XQo |
| YOU | Psalm 42:1 | As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. | https://youtu.be/TWOFh5Y97qE |
| LOOSE ME | John 8:36 | If the Son gives you freedom, you are free! | https://youtu.be/V7eZD3TKn_M |
| I'M OUT! | 2 Corinthians 6:17 | And so, the Lord says: ‘Come out from among them and be separate. Do not touch anything that is dirty and wrong. Then I will accept you.’ | https://youtu.be/aPiZNdtuhS8 |
| LOOK UP | Mark 5:36 | Jesus heard what the men said to Jairus. But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not be afraid. Instead, believe.’ | https://youtu.be/kW-12AkEAyg |

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| OUT POUR | 1 Chronicles 16:9 | Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! | https://youtu.be/edki3FBixp0 |
| THAT'S THE POINT | 1 John 4:19 | We love Him because He first loved us. | https://youtu.be/VqyFJStH0HU |
| I GOT YOU! | 1 Timothy 2:1 | So then, this is what I want to ask you first. Please pray for all people. Ask God to supply what they need. Ask God to help them. Thank God for what he does for everyone. | https://youtu.be/mdpRCS9Y1O8 |
| WALK WITH ME | Colossians 2:6 | You received Christ Jesus as Lord. So keep on living your lives in him. | https://youtu.be/aPXbvFavFHo |
| MY SEASON | 1 Corinthians 15:57 | 57But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. | https://youtu.be/SRxWYJuq5Y0 |
| WE WIN | Deuteronomy 20:4 | 4for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.' | https://youtu.be/xRdq7MNk5TM |
| BETTER DAYS | Psalm 34:8 | Oh, Taste and see that the Lord is Good! Blessed is the one who takes regue in him! | https://youtu.be/R7FLqAZMa4I |
| IN MY FAVOR | Genesis 50:20 | But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, | https://youtu.be/-fxCJj7kYk0 |
| OVERCAME | 1 John 5:4 | For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. | https://youtu.be/eNnKwBNNH-E |
| PERMISSION | Revelation 3:20 | Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. | https://youtu.be/6YY4cmwxEpU |
| HOLD ON | Luke 1:37 | For with God nothing will be impossible." | https://youtu.be/yJHc86XcQLI |
| HELP | 1 Peter 5:7 | casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. | https://youtu.be/a0WRd4QTTC0 |
| BELIEVE | Psalm 107:6 | Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, *And He delivered them out of their distresses.* | https://youtu.be/cEXhZ8PwM-Y |
| THIS IS ME | John 6:37 | All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. | https://youtu.be/NzNiE3ZUHdk |
| KNOWN | Matthew 10:30 | But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. | https://youtu.be/t7owFiihXgg |
| A PLACE FOR ME | John 14:3 | And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. | https://youtu.be/Mzv2JDkHEOI |
| LOVE IS | 1 John 4:19 | We love Him because He first loved us | https://youtu.be/3sPNVVMwdlI |
| VALUED | Matthew 6:26 | Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds | https://youtu.be/k7Pk5YMkEcg |

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| | | them. Are you not of more value than they? | |
| FAVORED | Proverbs 3:4 | *And so find favor and high esteem* in the sight of God and man. | https://youtu.be/p_q0HC36GpA |
| SHINING | Psalm 126:5 | Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. | https://youtu.be/UgG0Hu_FeiA |
| MEGA BLESSINGS | 1 Corinthians 2:9 | But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man. The things which God has prepared for those who love Him. | https://youtu.be/p58HS6h3l10 |
| RESCUE ME | Psalm 51:17 | *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,* a broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise. | https://youtu.be/KiNRIR8tjFc |
| MY HELP | Psalm 9:10 | And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You. | https://youtu.be/iF3xto-Vrig |
| WISDOM | Proverbs 4:7 | *Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom.* And in all your getting, get understanding. | https://youtu.be/gWithg2dIKY |
| ALREADY DONE | 2 Corinthians 9:8 | And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. | https://youtu.be/3k1e5JpEz70 |
| LOVED | 1 John 4:10 | In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. | https://youtu.be/mPLenycxI48 |
| ALREADY WON | 2 Chronicles 20:17 | You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, | https://youtu.be/LQMn301St_s |
| BEHIND THE SCENES | Romans 8:28 | And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. | https://youtu.be/xBYs3wmhUVc |
| LOVE FOUND | Proverbs 18:22 | *He who finds a wife finds a good thing,* And obtains favor from the Lord. | https://youtu.be/tZMWXgjffyc |
| A PLACE OF HEALING | Jeremiah 18:4 | And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do. | |
| CANDID CONVERSATIONS | John 10:27 | My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. | https://youtu.be/YDFl9goQD_c |
| WORKING FOR ME | Jeremiah 29:11 | For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. | https://youtu.be/3IHeswfn0AM |
| DON'T GIVE UP | Matthew 14:31 | And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt? | https://youtu.be/r3XulXeJ-tU |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LOVE WAITING | Revelations 22:17 | 17And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely. | https://youtu.be/omGYFOLFhEI |
| KEEP GOING | Galatians 6:9 | And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. | https://youtu.be/7dikmOcwzvE |
| WINNERS | Luke 18:27 | But he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. | https://youtu.be/C_hmHcoleYo |
| NEVER ALONE | Psalm 16:11 | You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand | https://youtu.be/ZPHXL8Poku0 |
| HEAL ME | Isaiah 57:18 | I have seen their ways, but I will heal them. I will guide them and reward them with comfort. | https://youtu.be/Qt2l9NA18fY |
| FRIENDS PRAY | James 5:16 | Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working | https://youtu.be/XZNEaTWxG_o |
| MAKEOVER | Psalm 51:10 | Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me | https://youtu.be/nyatKLJHPAM |
| SAFE PLACE | Psalm 91:2 | I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." | https://youtu.be/PkalShCfEi8 |
| SOURING | Psalm 31:24 | Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord | https://youtu.be/sFTMKdAPWzI?list=PL9cEoaYxSChJHRf1XDPGLrhCeUGD5Atdg |
| HUNGRY | Matthew 5:6 | Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled | https://youtu.be/jz3rZuqkFyw |

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